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PC PowerPlay

THE AUSTRALIAN PC ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

Plus GAMES CD ROM



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Voodoo 2

BENCHTESTED
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Bill Gets Serious About Fun

BLADE RUNNER
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13 DEMOS ON THE CD:

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Interstate 76 Arsenal
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Redline Racer

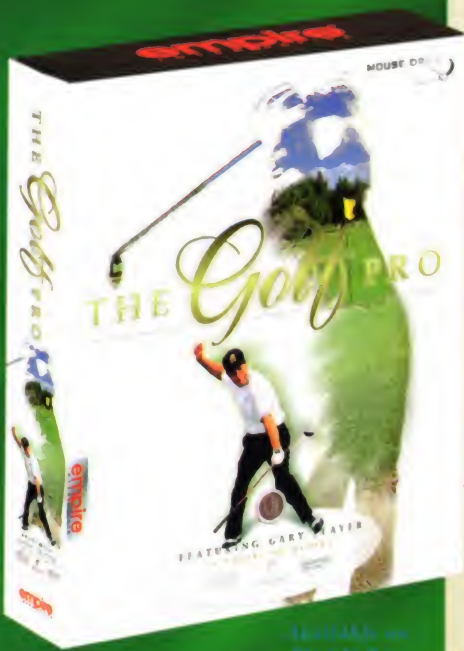
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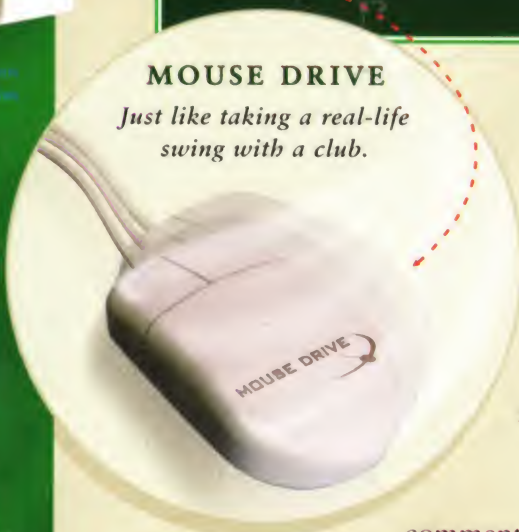
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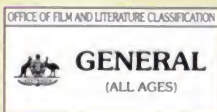
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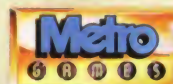
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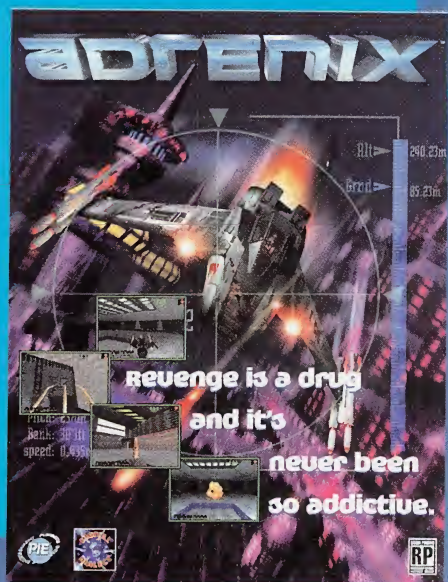
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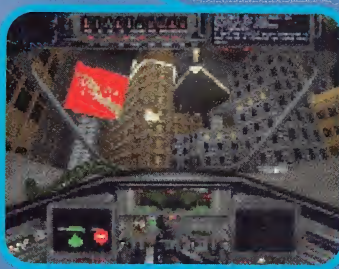
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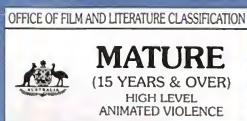
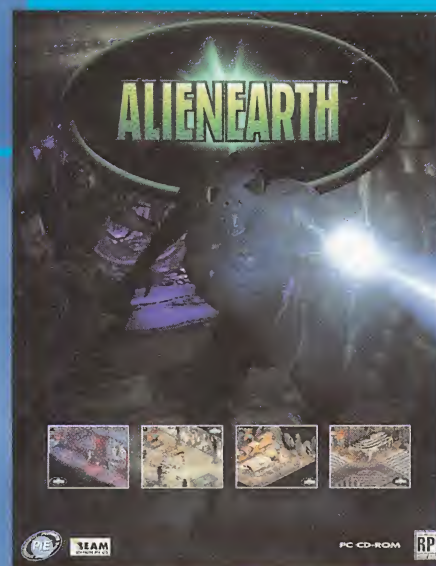
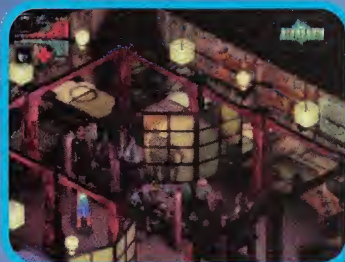


REVENGE IS A LOT
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WHEN YOU GET IT,
IT'S A RUSH BETTER
THAN ANY DRUG.



COMING SOON FROM PLAYMATES 1998

THE אדרינה
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אר עעבלי.



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What we're playing: It's a joke! We're trapped in a living hell! The post-Xmas drought means Ben's playing MOO2 non-stop, Gareth and Malcolm have turned to Quake 2 and nothing else and the contributors, well, they play what we tell them to play.

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Editorial



It's a good time to be a gamer. While the PC games scene is relatively young, it has progressed at an amazing pace. Graphics quality and sheer speed is now at a level we didn't dare dream of but a few years ago, and the average games developer now has ten times the staff it did back then.

Nothing the games biz has achieved though, can compare with the leaps we've seen in the last two years. I see two fundamental movements as being by far and away the most significant: 3D accelerators and online gaming. In the case of the former, the advent of the 3Dfx card and its' currently inferior cousins has been truly the most amazing thing ever to have happened. I load up a new 3D title and am still shocked at the quality and speed. I just can't get over it. Eye candy maybe, but games like Incoming and Forsaken, which are state of the art 3D games, are just so damn beautiful... Three years ago the holy grail for game graphics was SVGA. We yearned for faster CPUs and reconciled ourselves to spending up big again for the latest from Intel, in the hope that we could run 640 x 480 at reasonable frame rates (like, around 15 fps) - with fantasies of 800 x 600 gaming in maybe a few years, and 1024 x 768 a pipe dream that we thought might just be possible by the turn of the century. Needless to say, we're there now and playing with frame rates over 100fps. You can thank yourself for this. It is only the recognition of gaming as a valid commercial profit opportunity that has driven the development of the technology. Or in other words, you spend \$ on games and hardware and capitalist competition takes care of the rest.

Then there's online gaming. In the old days we'd hope that the token inclusion of a one-on-one modem mode would work, but it usually didn't. Now we log on effortlessly and play any of dozens of games against as many people as the game supports. People from anywhere in the world. Wild, beyond all reasonable expectations and just as incredible as 3D.

We've covered the evolution of these two paradigm leaps in our special feature on page 26. Special feature? A birthday special feature, is what. By some miracle of publishing science we've made it to Age 2. Said special feature looks at the last two years, as covered by PC PowerPlay. Of course, a dry old babble about technology is no way to celebrate two years of incredibly hard work, so you'll find the expected self-congratulating stuff plus some silly bits we hope you'll like. Finally we've got some more faces in the mag other than mine, we rounded up the regular writers, tickled their feet to make them smile and took a happy snap. It's champagne publishing, enjoy!

Ben

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Lovingly prepared each month by the incredibly dedicated Jere Lawrence, this is where to go to find out about our cool new CD interface, and how to make all the games and utilities run properly.

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The bit where we try to convince you to buy our mag for 12 months straight by giving away hot computing gear, guaranteed to maximise your potential geekiness. This month you could win a whole PC! Just for subscribing! Tops!

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The fastest, biggest, and bestest computer we could find given away to one of you. Did you win? Are you about to be the coolest person in all of Geekdom? Go on, have a look. You never know...

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Garry Wallis takes a long hard look at some of the new motherboards around town. Just how much difference does a motherboard make? Plenty!

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The guy we keep around because he makes us feel normal, the Spoonman, has gone for a look at Activision's 'Activlink' game service for us Aussies.

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Jere Lawrence, in his own inimitable style, takes you on a journey through the miasma of the world of Blade Runner. What a guy, eh?

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Where PowerPlay readers rant. We like ranters. And we've got some very nice Freaks Of The Month too. Keep 'em coming kids!

Flashback

130

Ah yes, another one from the annals of the C64 classics. Ghosts and Goblins, designed so that you would die just before you got to the end of the section, making you start all over again. Ahh, those were the days.





CD GUIDE

13 Demos including Abe's Oddysee and Longbow 2

It's month 2 in the year of the new menu and already we're making changes. The first thing we have discovered is a possible incompatibility with Internet Explorer 4 users. The first new menu does use some smatterings of Java and automatically started Netscape Communicator to run the menu. What we've since discovered is that IE4 changes certain aspects of Java execution and causes the menu to pop up 2 errors.

These errors aren't actually serious and the menu will still run however we don't like errors, in any form, so we've changed things again. Realising there are actually people out there that use IE4 (Read Ben Mansill) the Cover CD when inserted will start with a standard windows window where you choose the browser you want to start. If IE4 is the default Browser on your computer,

Double click the icon that reads PCPP (IE4).

The icon doesn't actually specifically start IE4, instead it launches the Windows 95 default browser. Double clicking the icon that reads PCPP will launch the menu using Netscape off the CD, and double clicking the OLDMENU icon will start the Old Powerplay menu if "God Forbid" everything else fails.

Here in both the PowerPlay labs and in the hallowed PowerPlay offices we've gone off the QC deep end to ensure that the new menu system works, and works well. To which we can say we're quite satisfied. We still need feedback on any possible teething problems (or even some comments if you just like the menu or have any suggestions). If possible, when reporting a bug, please take a screenshot of the error and send it to cdtech@next.com.au

Now, in case the new menu gives your system indigestion, you can still launch the old menu by following these simple instructions.

Right click on your CDROM icon.

Click on "Start old Menu"

We plan on leaving the old menu on the next few cover CD's until we can gather enough feedback on the new menu. Whilst on the topic of feedback, we'd also really appreciate your comments on the overall look and feel of the new menu. Now that we're using Netscape and Java to present the interface we can make any modification we feel necessary.

How the new menu works.

We've tried to keep everything on the new menu as simple as possible. On the left hand side of the menu, you will notice a Menu bar with a number of different options. Clicking on this bar will bring up the titles for either "Games, Utilities or Patches".

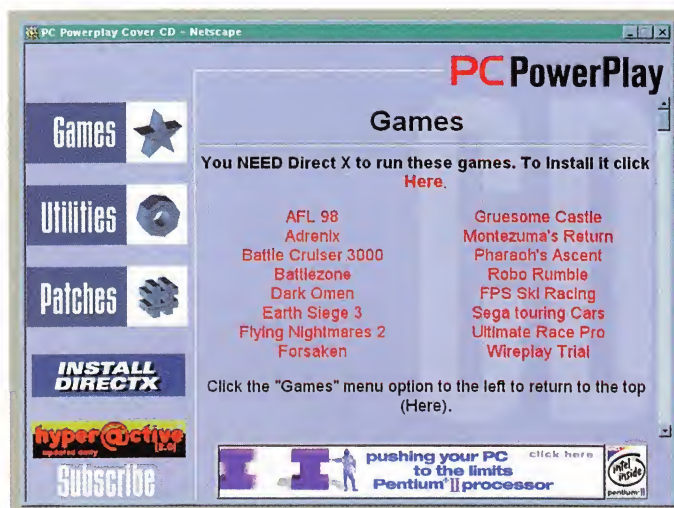
Clicking Install Direct X will Install Direct X and clicking Subscribe will present you with a number of options that allow you to subscribe to PC Powerplay.

To Navigate the menu, clicking the big Games "button" will place you at the top of the Games list and allow you to choose the game you're currently interested in. This will actually jump you to a point within the entire document and you can still navigate backwards and forwards using the scroll bar.

To return back to the top and select another title, just click the "Games" button again. The same process applies for utilities as well.

A word on Pex. (Pex = Powerplay EXecutable)

If you've already run the Cover CD, you may have noticed that we're using Netscape to display



the new menu. This was decided upon because it gives us all the flexibility we'd ever need. If we had the time, we could make a whole new menu each month (we're don't though), but more importantly now we can make additions as required.

Netscape however, because of security restrictions, cannot execute any programs off the local hard drive. If it could, then idiots on the net could write Java/Netscape code to do potentially unpleasant things to your machine.

Now ease of use we feel is a must for any kind of Cover CD. So, I have written a program that interfaces with Netscape allowing you to execute applications from a click. When you click on a link however, a dialogue box will come up asking you

whether you wish to open the link, or save it to disk.

We're confident that can just choose to "Open it" (you must do that to execute the program) and check the checkbox that asks if you want to be asked this question again and leave it at that. (Doing this will cause Netscape to never query execution of a Pex file again)

We've tested Pex thoroughly and have not been able to execute a program off a local hard drive from a remote location off the Internet or internal network (Intranet). However the decision is wholly up to you. If you use Netscape as your preferred browser, and are particularly security conscious, then you would want to uncheck the checkbox that asks you to confirm execution of a local file.

Ultimately the decision is totally yours and we have deliberately left that security check in place for those with systems that need to scrutinize everything (such as a work computer), and hope that you appreciate our concern for your security.

Troubleshooting

If you see the error;
"Netscape is unable to find the file or directory named:
/pcppmenu/html/index.html"

This means that you already have a Netscape Communicator session open. Close all Netscape windows (including mail) and double click your CD icon to start the menu.

The Games

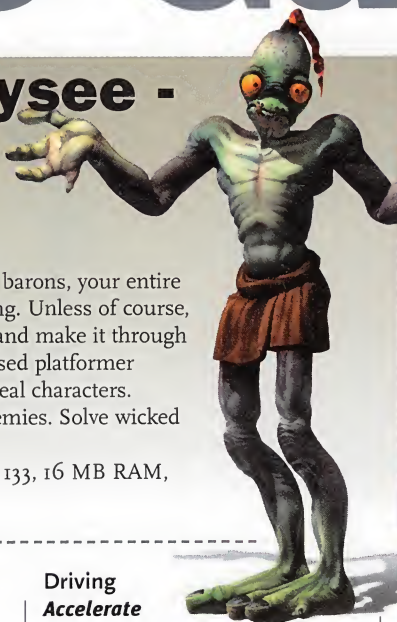
Abes Oddysee - Oddworld

GT Interactive
Action Platform

`\games\wing5\abeodd`

In a world run by ruthless meat barons, your entire race is about to become pie-filling. Unless of course, you can escape Rupture Farms and make it through this demo of the cunningly devised platformer Oddworld. Communicate with real characters. Possess and blow away your enemies. Solve wicked situations.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 MB RAM, Soundcard.



Interstate 76 Arsenal

Activision
Action

`\games\wing5\i76nitro`

The Nitro Pack for Interstate '76 is a fully loaded expansion pack featuring 20 new single-player missions, all-new multi-player missions and game options, new cars and weapons, and other enhancements! This demo offers just a taste.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

Driving
Accelerate

= Numpad Up, Joystick Forward
Brake = Numpad Down, Joystick Back

Steer Left/Right = Numpad Left/Right, Joystick Left/Right

Emergency Brake = Z

Reverse = Tab

Shift Up = . (Period)

Shift Down = , (Comma)

Radar

Radar Range = R

Target Nearest Enemy = T

Target Next Enemy = E

Cancel Target = Y



Target Under Reticle = Q

Weapons

Fire Weapon = Space Bar, Joystick Button 1

Cycle Weapon = Enter, Joystick Button 2

Link Similar Weapons = L

Fire Hardpoint 1 = 1

Fire Hardpoint 2 = 2

Fire Hardpoint 3 = 3

Fire Hardpoint 4 = 4

Fire Hardpoint 5 = 5

Aim Handgun = Arrow Key Left/Right, Joystick Left/Right

Views

Glance Down (View Dash) = Arrow Key Up, Joystick Hat Up

Glance Left/Right = Arrow Key Left/Right, Joystick Hat Left/Right

Glance Back = Arrow Key Down, Joystick Hat Down

Toggle V-Pit/G-Pit = F1

External Cam Forward = F2

External Cam Rear = F3

External User to Target

View = F4
External Target to User View = F5
No Cockpit = F6
Fender Cam Front = F7
Fender Cam Rear = F8
Beauty Shot Front = F9
Satellite View = F10
Look at Target = O (Ins)
Quick View = V
Zoom In (External Cam) = Page Up
Zoom Out (External Cam) = Page Down
Toggle Rearview Mirror = ~
External Instrument Displays =] and [

Other

Horn = G

View Map = M

View Notepad = N

Pause Game = Pause

Exit Game = Esc

Last Bronx

Sega

3D fighting

Another of Sega's Arcade conversions, you fight on the streets of Tokyo against vicious gang members.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard, 28.8 Modem.

F1 = Pauses the game and brings up the Help file

F3 = Pauses game/resumes game

F4 = shows the Screen Settings window

F5 = shows the Key Assign screen

Alt+F4 = Exits the game and returns to Windows 95

Alt+F2 = Stops the current game and returns to the Title screen

Player 1

Space = Start

W = Up

A = Left

D = Right

S = Down

V = Guard

G = Punch

H = Kick

Player 2

Enter = Start

Up = Up

Down = Down

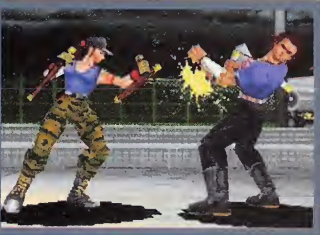
Left = Left

Right = Right

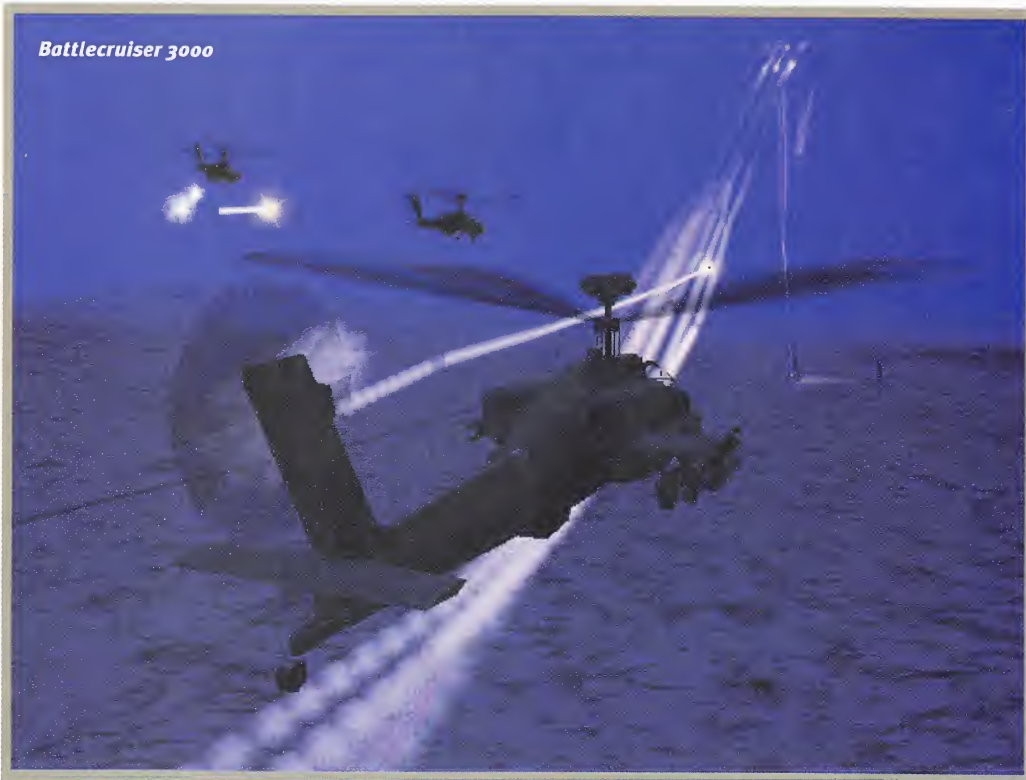
Delete = Punch

End = Guard

Pg Down = Kick



Battlecruiser 3000



Longbow 2

Janes Combat Simulations Simulation

This is the Direct 3D/3Dfx/Software version of the very popular Longbow 2. With stunning graphics and incredible realism Longbow 2 is the premiere simulation of 97.

Once Installed, run demo.exe from the appropriate directory.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

This game supports the 3Dfx/Direct 3D

Left Arrow = Cyclic Left-rolls chopper to the left

Right Arrow = Cyclic Right-rolls chopper to the right

Up Arrow = Cyclic Down-pitches chopper down

Down Arrow = Cyclic Up-pitches chopper up

[= Tail rotor left

] = Tail rotor right

+ = Increase Collective (increases altitude)

- = Decrease Collective (decreases altitude)

Backspace = Cycle Weapons

Space Bar = Fire Selected Weapon

Enter Key = Fire Cannon

F1 = Front Cockpit View

F4 = Enable Virtual Cockpit (Alt and Joystick or Alt and Arrow key pan view)

T = Select Next Target

H = Auto-Hover (works only at speeds <= 10 knots)

Control-Z = Cycle Time of Day (Dawn, Day, Dusk, Night)

A = Enable Autopilot

ALT-X = Exit demo

M1 Tank Platoon 2

rolling preview - Microprose Combat Simulation

Anyone who can remember M1 tank platoon knows that it was an incredible simulation for its time, offering captivating gameplay and realism. M1 Tank Platoon 2 due soon looks set to be a worthy sequel. This is a non interactive rolling demo.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.



Plane Crazy

Europress

Arcade flying game

Tired of the roads? Then take to the skies with Plane Crazy, a soaring aerial speed-fest in which only the most daring and courageous pilots will survive to win the day. Published by Europress and developed by Inner Workings, Plane Crazy is a fantastic twist on the traditional racing genre, offering a breakneck turn of speed, a range of daredevil stunts and a dash of "wacky" humour!

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM,

Soundcard.

This game supports Direct 3D. This game supports a Joystick/ Gamepad

Joystick

UP = push flightstick forward

DOWN = pull flightstick back

LEFT/RIGHT = move flightstick left/right

MAIN TRIGGER = stop power-up cycle/fire power-up

SIDE TRIGGER = fire sonic cannon

THROTTLE = throttle

Keyboard

UP arrow = flightstick forward

DOWN arrow = flightstick back

LEFT / RIGHT arrow = move flightstick left / right

A = increase throttle

Z = decrease throttle

SPACE = stop power-up cycle / fire power up

X = fire sonic cannon

Esc = quit to desktop



Red Alert Demo

Westwood

Real Time Strategy

Is it arrogance or slipping sales that caused Westwood to release this demo of Red Alert more than a year after the actual game. Who knows, but we thought we'd better put it on the cover CD in case someone out there hadn't played it yet. Although surpassed by many other REAL Strategy games of late, Red Alert is the sequel to the brilliant Command and Conquer.

Once Installed, run SETUP to configure your sound card.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.



Redline Racer

Ubisoft
Racing

Red Line Racer delivers pure speed in an explosive motorcycle racer that with a 3Dfx will turn your PC into a true arcade quality 3D experience. Select the visor-cam view and discover



what makes motorcycle racing so thrilling, as the road screams beneath your wheels and the horizon lurches as you carve your bike through unforgiving curves. **System requirements:** Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports Direct 3D/3Dfx

Up arrow = Up a gear (manual gearbox)

Down arrow = Down a gear (manual gearbox)

Left arrow = Turn left

Right arrow = Turn right

Left Shift = Accelerator

Left Ctrl = Brake

Z Key = Signal to other players

A Key = Turbo boost

ESC = Pause menu

F1 = Help

F2 = Change camera view

Rising lands

Microids

Real Time Strategy

After the Apocalypse, living a daily fight for survival. Players (1 to 4 via network) manage resources and territory to build camps, cities using different structures, protect mankind from extinction and to best defend or attack themselves against invading armies.

System requirements:

Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game is controlled with the mouse

Multiplayer Client Install

Multiplay

Go online, meet new people, blow them up then laugh at them.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

Iznogoud

Microids

DOS Platform

From the creator of Asterix, Goscinny and the famous cartoonist Tabary. Famous cartoon character Iznogoud meets many interesting characters as he faces many challenges in his quest to become the new Sultan.

Run setup to configure your sound card, then `iznogoud.exe` to play.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

Heavy Gear

Activision

3D Stomping Action

Based on the Dream Pod 9 paper and pencil role-playing game of the same name, Heavy Gear is set in a universe not too dissimilar to that of the Mechwarrior series. 4000 years in the future, the people of Terra Nova struggle to survive. The planet is separated between the lands of the



Sim Safari

Maxis
Simulation

SimSafari brings Africa to you! Imagine yourself in rugged bush country, peering through binoculars at vast herds of elephants, zebras and lions. Choose from exotic plants and wildlife to create your own safari park. Team with a neighbouring village and build a flourishing safari camp.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

This game is controlled with the mouse.

Confederated Northern City States (CNCS) and the Allied Southern Territories (AST). But who cares!

They're out to blow each other to bits and that's where you step in. Get killing.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

This game supports the Rendition/3Dfx.

Note: Read the intro screen for information on the required drivers for Heavy Gear to work.

Utilities

Add/Remove Cleaner

Win95 System

Windows 95 includes a simple way of uninstalling programs by going to Control Panel...Add/Remove Programs. Unfortunately if you delete things manually programs that are already gone will be listed there and 'stuck' there.

Add/Remove Cleaner was made to take off any programs you don't want listed there for whatever reason. It does NOT delete any files, only the entries for Add/Remove Programs.

Active Worlds Browser

Internet

The Active Worlds Browser is a browser that you use to visit Active Worlds virtual environments. An Active World is a place that you inhabit along with other users who are logged in to the Active World at the same time as you are. You can communicate with other users, and you can see their avatars. Many Active Worlds let you build, and whatever you build is visible to all others who visit that Active World. In short, an Active World is a shared experience using the Active Worlds Browser as an intermediary and common language. Each Active World may be subtly or radically different, but the Browser can take you to all of them. As the Active Worlds Universe continues to expand, your Active Worlds Browser can take you from place to place quickly and easily, and you'll be able to see new places and talk to new people.

Dead Letter Demo

Internet

Deadletter is an anti-spammer for Eudora Pro and Light (version 3.05 or higher). You can use its presets, which work quite well, or add your own favourite spams to the list. You can easily block any address, domain, subject, or text from being deposited in your Inbox, sending it instead to the "Deadletter" box.

Disconnecter

Internet

You probably often want to start downloading some files from the

Internet, and then leave the computer. You don't do that because you're afraid to see your phone - and ISP bill at the end of the month. So, in case you want to download a huge file, or several files, you would have to download only what you can in the time you're surfing.

This is where Disconnecter's steps in, you can start downloading a file or several files, activate Disconnecter, and it'll watch the download process. When all the downloads are done - Disconnecter will automatically disconnect you.

Getright 3.1

Internet

This is the latest version of Getright which includes these new features. The following are some of the major new features and fixes in 3.1:

Monitors clicks in Microsoft Internet Explorer (4.0 or higher) in addition to Netscape Navigator/Communicator. Web page processor to extract all the files from a web page. Re-Use FTP connection if more files are on the same server. Always start automatic downloading when connected to the Internet. Use Cookies from your web browser for sites that require cookies to download.

Hypersnap DX

Screen Capture

Captures Windows 95, NT, DIRECTX, and 3DFX GLIDE SCREENS for WEB, WINHELP, and more! Save captures as JPEGs, GIFs, BMPs, or any of TWENTY FORMATS with subformatting variations using the Pro Plug-in. Use hotkeys or an auto-timer to grab a desktop, highlighted window, or any area.

MailtalkX

Internet

MailTalkX is a unique new email monitoring utility. Running either on Windows '95 or NT 4.0 it's features include, audible and visual notification of incoming email, automatic updating, log file maintenance, spam filtering, and individual wav file settings. MailTalkX will even allow for unlimited email accounts. All features are fully configurable by the user.

Nettools 2.0

Internet

NetTools 2.0 is a user configurable speed bar designed specifically for use with internet applications and HTML authoring tools. Nettools will launch virtually any application on your PC as long as it runs under windows.

Registry Search and Replace

Win95 System

Registry Search + Replace is a Win32 utility which can be used to simplify maintenance of the Windows NT and Windows 95 registration databases (the "registry").

Stay Connected

Internet

This program keeps Internet Service Providers (ISP) from dropping your Internet connectivity after certain period of inactivity (usually 15 minutes). The program keeps the Internet connection alive by sending/receiving packets to a host at a specified interval. Runs in traybar.

Telecafe

Internet

A popular chat program for "meeting" people..

Wintune 97

System tuner

Tune up a variety of Windows 95 functions such as applications, Disk access, Memory and video access to name just a few.

Win Download

Internet

The purpose of WinDownload is to queue up the files that you wish to download to keep from delaying the loading of html pages as you surf the web. You can use WinDownload to schedule downloading for later times or to maximize bandwidth by downloading as many files simultaneously as is efficient.

MIRC

Internet

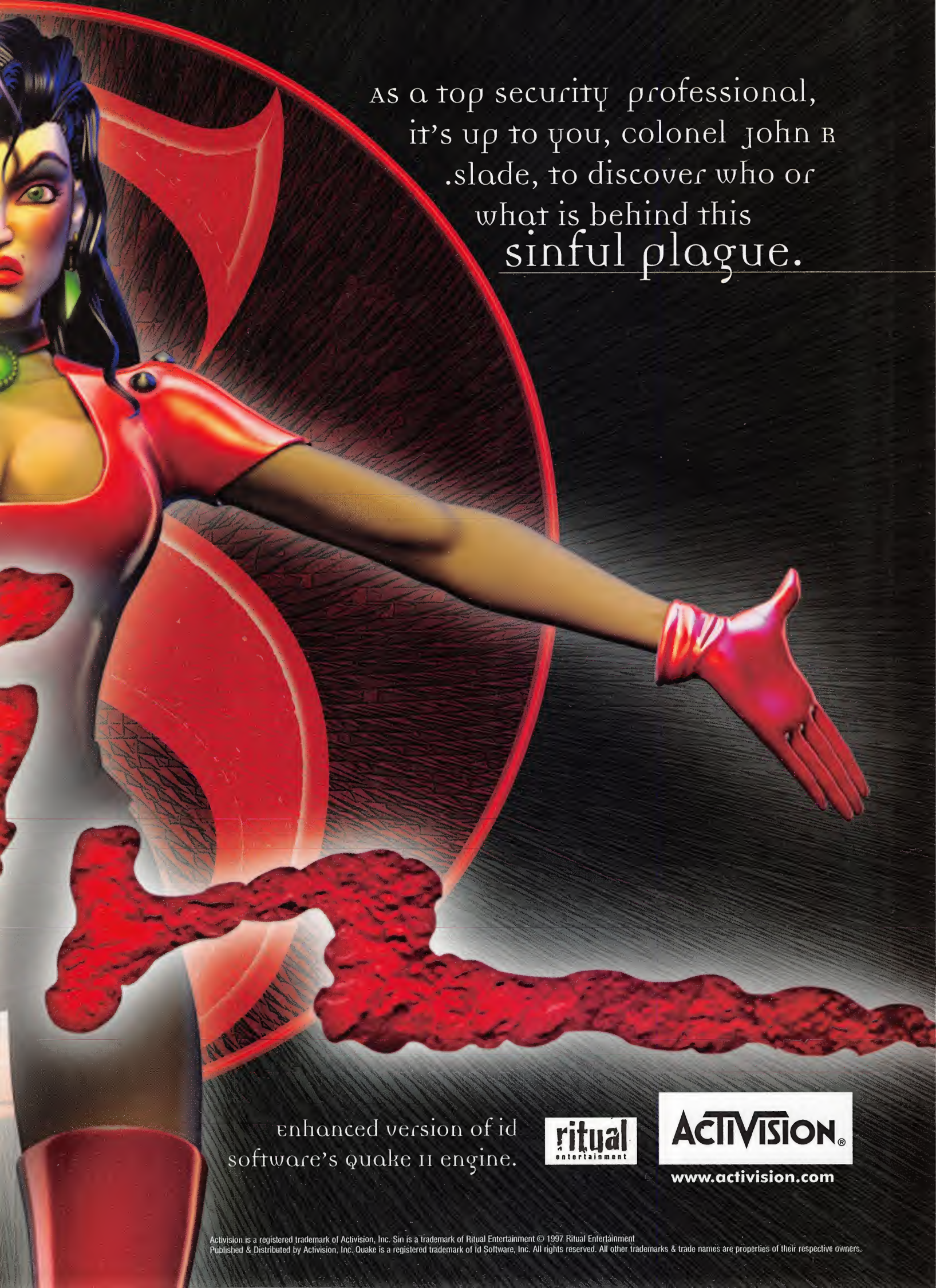
One of the most popular IRC chat programs.

www.gamesmen.com.au

There's a crime wave in the city of
Freeport and it's linked to the unholy drug
U-4. people are disappearing, and
mutants are taking over the streets.
sources say that sintek industries
and it's lethally gorgeous CEO,
Elexis Sinclair, are connected
to the madness.



COMING SOON



As a top security professional,
it's up to you, Colonel John R.
Slade, to discover who or
what is behind this
sinful plague.

enhanced version of id
software's quake II engine.



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sidelines

We originally thought it was an sad, sick, and sorry April fools joke, but unfortunately it was real. Ah yeah, Simutronics' Hercules and Xena: Alliance of Heroes was launched on April 1st on the Excite games channel to, erm, hundreds of discerning fans. If you really want to, you can download the game from the Excite site. We're sure that it's a top quality title, with oodles of family sanctioned action and mayhem, and we're willing to bet that there's a picture perfect ending where the values of truth, justice and the American way are upheld by the magnificent couple. Can you imagine the offspring they'd have? <Shudder>

Don't you just love it when huge companies start suing, slandering and generally antagonising each other? It should make you feel warm and loved, because in this case it's all in an effort to secure your patronage for their products. Latest news is that Creative Technology has filed a patent infringement lawsuit against Diamond Multimedia and ESS Technology. It all relates to Diamond's 'Sonic Impact' sound cards, and ESS's Maestro-2 audio chip. They're fighting hard for your money, dear reader, and if the free market adage holds, then it's us that will benefit in the end. Supposedly.

Heheh. You gotta love Macintosh users. They've finally gotten hold of Quake, just at the time when the rest of the computing world is moving to Quake 2. Scott Kevill, an unabashed Mac supporter from West Australia has gone and made Quakefinder, an app like Gamespy which hunts down and tracks MacQuake servers, as well as 'Quiver' a MacQuake level editor. Check out <http://www.curtin.edu.au/~scott/macquake/index.html> for more info. But if you're a hard core MacQuaker, you might want to check out <http://www.visi.com/~zappa/quake/botblast/omi.shtml> for a bit of bot blasting action. But be warned, Malcolm (Gundam) our art director is a pretty tough competitor.

Our bad! We're not perfect here at PowerPlay, and in our review of the Jedi Knight expansion pack, Mysteries of the Sith we accidentally named the price as being \$79.95 - when it was actually a paltry \$39.95! Don't tell the marketing types, but even at 80 bucks we still thought it was worth it, but for half that price. Wow! If you've got JK already, you need this expansion pack, it rocks! And it's cheap too. Sorry about that.

THE ISSUE: Thrustmastergate

We do like a saga at PC PowerPlay, and now we've got one that we, in no small way, helped start.

You may remember back in issue #21 we told you about how great the new Thrustmaster Nascar Pro steering wheel and pedal set was, and it was. We'd been sent a test unit from Thrusty in the US and it was indeed, as with all Thrustmaster gear, top stuff. Then The Problem started.

Reports from readers and our friends in retailland began pouring in. Wheel wobble, is The Problem. Out of the box the wheel rattles and shakes and feels decidedly low-quality. About the same time we were sent 3 Nascar Pros from the local distributor, and they indeed displayed the same problem. We did some research and discovered that this appeared to be a common problem with most, if not all Nascar Pros in Australia. So, we did the only responsible thing - we printed a retraction and consumer alert in our March issue.

The bear in the woods hit the fan, and the response from Thrustmaster was honourable and commendable - if not slightly worrying. It seems the Australian consignment from the factory in Japan came from

a faulty batch where the wheel screw hadn't been tightened at all! Now, before you start thinking that we're the dumping ground for defective product, Thrustmaster assure us that it was all an honest mistake and that they will do whatever they can to sort it out. We know from experience that Thrustmaster offer the best tech support in the world, so feel good about their claims. Jeremy Bishop, Thrusty's Director of International Sales phoned us and asked that we pass on his apology to all Thrustmaster customers.

If you bought a Nascar Pro and you've got the wobbles, then follow these steps, as provided by

Thrustmaster.

If you feel the steering wheel of your Nascar Pro is too loose, or wobbles excessively, you may easily adjust it by tightening the Steering Wheel Attachment Screw, located just behind the wheel, at the bottom of the steering shaft. Use a standard Phillip's head screw driver, and be careful not to over-tighten the screw, or you may damage your Nascar



Pro. The nine Hub

Screws at the back of the wheel may also require periodical tightening. Use a smaller Phillip's head, and again, don't over-tighten.

If that's too much for you, or if it just doesn't help, call the Australian distributor Metro Games on 039 329 2999.

This message has been brought to you by the friendly team at the PowerPlay Institute for Excellence in Things.

Big Dazz and Jonesy Grip the Stick

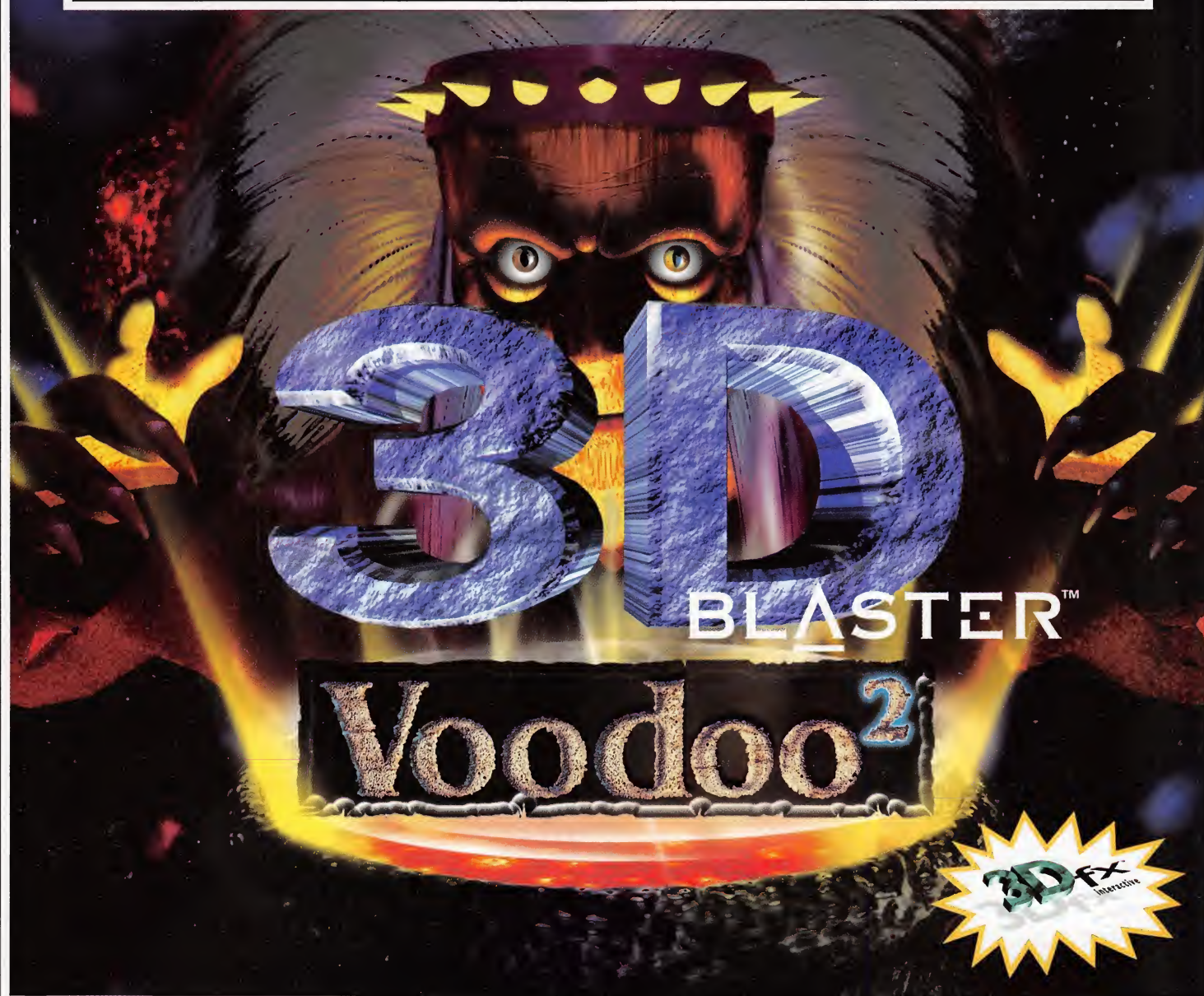
Channel 9 and Ubi Soft have signed a deal that should do wonders for Formula 1 Racing Simulation's credibility. Before each F1 race telecast for the '98 season, Big Darryl Eastlake and Alan Jones will be using the game to demonstrate the circuit. Big Daz and Jonesy will park the car at each tricky corner and switch to the external view to show off the intricacies of the bends and point out the perfect racing line. Then they'll switch back to the cockpit view and cruise along to the next corner. This is fantastic stuff. The thought of Daz and Jonesy scratching their chins and staring at the computer screen while speaking in tones of absolute authority has us very excited indeed. We'd buy any product Big

Daz endorsed, as we're sure would you, so all we can say is that we hope Ubi Soft have plenty of stock in hand.

Of course, the marriage between computer games and motor racing is one that goes way back. Jacques Villeneuve likes nothing better than a few hot laps in Grand Prix 2 to get into the groove, and local legend Cameron McConville reckons TOCA Tourers is the next best thing to real life racing, as do we, but he'd know and we wouldn't...



The Fastest 3D Gameplay. Period.



Introducing...the new 3D Blaster Voodoo2, the fastest
3D game accelerator ever created for the PC.

50 billion operations per second. 3 million triangles per second. Up to 12MB of ultra-fast, single-cycle DRAM. Two independent, on-board texture processors for single-pass trilinear filtering. Full triangle set-up processing. LOD MIP-mapping. Texture compositing, morphing and other complex effects. High-precision Z-buffering. True perspective correction with sub-pixel, and sub-texel accuracy. As much as 3 times the performance of the previous generation of Voodoo-based accelerators.

Put some magic in your PC. Get it now at your favourite retailer.



CREATIVE
P.A.C.I.F.I.C

Creative Pacific Pty Ltd 32-34 Dickson Ave, Artarmon, NSW 2064
Ph: (02) 9906 8887 Fax: (02) 9906 5577 Website: www.eppl.com.au

sidelines

Just when you thought the whole overhyped VR 'virtual worlds' thing was well and truly dead, 3Dfx are doing their level best to resurrect it. They've created a new addition to their site, which is only accessible if you have one of their 3D accelerator cards installed. Once you've downloaded all the necessary files and software, you can then walk around '3Dfx City' in a small window of your browser, which enables you to walk around a find things. What sort of things? Er, links to other web pages and other areas of the 3Dfx site. Fantastic! Slow, useless and a complete waste of time, this is the way of the future!

Xatrix Entertainment, best known for the rootin' tootin' shootin' funfest that was Redneck Rampage are entering the final stages of development for Reckoning, the official Quake 2 mission pack, and damn, does it sound good. 15 new single player levels, heaps of multiplayer maps, and plenty of new monsters and weapons too. Take the amphibious Gekks thing that shoots acidic venom at you, a repair bot that can 'fix up' dead enemies for starters. And then there's the weapons, like a 'Phalanx Particle Cannon', the 'Ion Ripper', and a 'Trap' which creates an energy field in the floor, sucks enemies down into it and then pops out a food cube for you afterwards. Cool, eh? Expect it sometime soon-ish

Still with Quake stuff, it was a while ago now, but American McGee, who had been with id since Doom2 had been 'let go' by John Carmack because he was "not seeing what they wanted" from McGee. Paul Steed, in typically understated prose, said that "American just did the Romero thing and started buying into his own celebrity status...[since] October of 1996 American was always on the verge of being fired" (www.neurogamer.com/ge/steed-f.htm). Tell it like it is Paul!

And another to jump into the departure lounge recently was the lead designer of Total Annihilation, Chris Taylor. His decision to leave seems, at least on the surface, to have been amicable, and has moved on to other projects - which might well include just hanging out and having a life for a while. Well, he deserves a break, seeing as he's been with TA since the beginning, including the post release maps and units, as well as overseeing the production of the expansion pack from go to whoa. Lets just hope he comes back from his break refreshed and ready to start all over again with the next generation of games.

Auran team up with EA

Dark Reign developers Auran have teamed up with Electronic Arts to develop a new breed of strategy game. The new, and as yet untitled, game will attempt to generate more emotional involvement from the player, who in the past has only laughed maniacally after sending in the suicide troops. Giving more of a damn about units and battalions only comes after invest-

ing time and effort building them up, says Auran's Chris Murphy. The RPG twist has been tried in strategy games before - Dark Omen: Shadow of the Horned Rat for example, but so far strategy gamers haven't taken the bait.

Auran are currently working on their game adaptation of Robin Crossby's Harn fantasy world. Electronic Arts approached Auran about the new project. As to whether this signals an end to the publishing

deal Auran currently have with Activision, Chris Murphy replied that "we haven't made any decision yet". Activision, who effectively own Dark Reign, will be releasing the next add-on Rise of the Shadow Hand.



Biggest Quake Tourney EVER!

This late-breaking news hit the PowerPlay desk mere minutes before our deadline, which is why you've missed the first half of the excellent thing you're about to read about, but if you act fast you can be in for the second half.

Still with us? What are we talking about exactly? One hell of a huge Quake Tourney, is what. Wireplay, the fine and fast online games network, is running the show. It's on between April 11th to the 28th, with the huge Clan Final in Sydney on May 2nd.

This is Australia's largest and richest Tourney so far, with the main prize being a trip to E3 in Atlanta this year to meet the idsoftware lads. Tim Willits of idsoftware will be flying out for the Grand Final, and there will be celebrities (woo hoo) present to make you feel special and important. We'll probably be there, so when you frag Flouncy, Shep or Gundam, spare a sympathetic thought and savour that special shiver that only comes from killing a PowerPlayer.

Go straight to www.wireplay.com.au and get the details. Wireplay have assured us that it's perfectly OK to get in and play half way through and you won't be disadvantaged.

Check out wireplay anyway, since their launch they've really picked up speed, offering the coolest games and pings as low as 105 for Quake.

TOP TEN GAMES

Rank	Title	Developer / Distributor
TW	LW	
1	15	CROC
FOX / ELECTRONIC ARTS		
2	8	DARK REIGN
AURAN & ACTIVISION / ROADSHOW		
3	1	QUAKE II
ID SOFTWARE / ROADSHOW		
4	10	TOMB RAIDER II
CORE DESIGN-EIDOS / SEGA OXISOFT		
5	6	TOTAL ANNIHILATION
CAVEDOG / GT INTERACTIVE		
6	4	AFL '98
EA SPORTS / ELECTRONIC ARTS		
7	14	FLIGHT UNLIMITED 2
LOOKING GLASS-EIDOS / SEGA OXISOFT		
8	2	RIVEN
BUNGIE-BRODERBUND / WOLF INTERACTIVE		
9	17	MS FLIGHT SIM
MICROSOFT / VARIOUS		
10	3	AGE OF EMPIRES
MICROSOFT / VARIOUS		

Week ending 15th March

The ACER best selling charts are carefully compiled from a sample panel of retailers selected across Australia including mass merchants, department stores, specialty software stores and independent outlets. Retailers surveyed include Myer Grace Bros, David Jones and John Martins, K Mart, Target, Big W, World 4 Kids, Harvey Norman Computer Super stores, Blockbuster, Brashes, Video Games Heaven and Games Wizards ©1997

Charts supplied by Australian Computer Entertainment Review



"Croc"!!!!? How is it that all the 'serious' games get overtaken by a Playstation-converted platformer? We gave it 74% in March, concluding that it was "An extremely cute, good-looking and playable platformer". EA's marketing blitz, is why. Big-time radio promotion and all the rest. Despite being elitist, arrogant pigs, we do like a good platformer and Croc is certainly that. If it's top 5 next month we promise to be more respectful towards the Playstation.

And Dark Reign picks up its second wind, thanks to a special price discount. Gamers show their good taste and clever shopper instinct by picking up the best real time strategy \$49.95 can buy.

And you thought the war was over!

Whose side are you on?



SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION MOUSE PACK

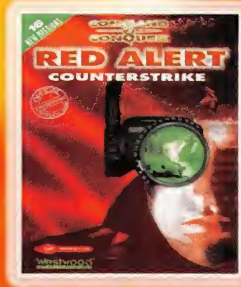
also available.....



PC CD ROM
PSX



PC CD ROM
PSX



PC CD ROM



PC CD ROM

coming soon.....



PC CD ROM



PSX



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Liz gets the thumbs up!

Rhona Mitra, supermodel, drop-dead gorgeous babe and apparently temperamental pain was to be the face of Lara. Talk of movies abounded and we were rather pleased with this realisation of one of our favourite fantasies, but the plan has come unstuck.

Apparently dear Rhona was getting a little full of herself as a result of her big break, so dear Eidos simply dumped her, leaving Lara without a real-life manifestation - something the world clearly needs.

HOT RUMOUR! Word is that none other than Liz Hurley, who we love as much, if not more so, than Lara herself, will be the new Lara. We're not talking shop appearances, for Liz is clearly above mixing it with commonfolk, but the movie seems a goer and Liz is the hot tip! This is simply fantastic news. We're not sure why though, but it does warm our insides.



INTEL ... only the paranoid survive?

Intel's shock announcement that they are predicting a 10% shortfall in 1st quarter earnings, sent a shock wave throughout the entire industry. What could have faltered the mighty Intel giant? Doesn't happen to be the fact that Intel has no processor to compete in the now lucrative low-end PC market does it? Could be. The actual amount of new PC's sold in this low-end market has been estimated as high as 40 - 45 percent of the actual total number of new PC's sold. Both ourselves and countless other people have said that Intel were crazy for abandoning the socket 7 market. They didn't even offer a viable path for the socket 7 systems that they themselves once created. What we do know is that Intel seems to be changing their ways. Has it come soon enough you may ask? Probably, Intel has the muscle to pull itself through and certainly has the resources and the money.

We don't know what to make of their entry into the low-end market with a product family known as "Celeron". This new product family called "Celeron" will be the Pentium II that was once known as "Covington". A

cacheless Pentium II and a low cost core logic chipset known as the EX chipset. The sort of performance hit this processor will incur because of its lack of cache memory is still uncertain. We know that it definitely won't break any speed records. It also certainly won't be able to beat even Cyrix or AMD's high-end processors. Although a version of "Celeron" that will be released in the 3rd quarter will come in 128KB or 256KB cache varieties. This processor should perform quite a bit better than a totally cacheless Pentium II. It seems Intel's underlying plan is to try to move the market over to its patented slot 1 technology with this "Celeron" family of low cost processors - thus killing off AMD and Cyrix's socket 7 market. It will be very interesting to see how this all pans out, Intel could lose a big section of the low-end market to AMD and Cyrix, if "Celeron" proves to be just an overpriced Pentium MMX, speed wise.

PC systems based on an AMD or Cyrix processor come pretty damn close in general running speed as a Pentium II processor now. So with the money saved on the processor extra function-

ality can be added to these systems. Add an extra 32MB RAM or a better monitor, for example. It seems people don't believe it has to be Intel Inside anymore, especially when the Intel Outside PC has better features. AMD and Cyrix processors are becoming very viable options for consumers that want value for money. Of course Intel will still dominate in the high-end as they always do. The question is will us games players be satisfied with an AMD or a Cyrix chip powering our games? As we all know these CPU's may come close to a Pentium II when performing standard instructions. It's when the FPU (Floating Point Unit) is used for games like Quake that the Intel starts to show its superiority. But wait ... AMD and Cyrix have their new 3D enhanced processors hitting the streets hopefully pretty soon. Releasing these CPU extensions could draw quite a large proportion of the mid-range market away from Intel, though Intel is sure to have a battle plan. After all Andy Grove once did say 'only the paranoid survive'. Let's hope he has been paranoid enough - it could be worth bringing forward your MMX2 extensions, Andy!

Ultima Online vs. The Revolting Gamers

While we fully expect all ground-breaking paradigm leaps to be perfect from the word go, it seems some gamers don't. A class action has been filed against Origin Systems and Electronic Arts, with charges that include "breach of express and implied warranties" and "negligent misrepresentation".

Of course they be talking about Ultima Online, the wondrous online megaplayer game. While the game has been up and running for many months now, it has been prone to technical problems. The odd server crash has caused many thousands of players to simultaneously utter their favourite expletive, while cursing the name Lord British, while the ever-present lag, contend those behind the legal action, effectively negates Origin's claims of having a "real-time" gaming environment.

It'll be a fascinating time if the case makes it to trial, as false advertising for games in general could well become the issue in the aftermath. A publisher's claims have never before been called into question, and the prospect of having conser-



vative restraint preside over the typically outrageous game packaging wording is amusing, if somewhat worrying. While we at PowerPlay believe that a game world as revolutionary as Ultima Online should be allowed a little leeway, being an order of magnitude bigger and more complex than anything that came

before it, tighter control ought to be exercised over offenders whose crimes are more distinct. Like Origin's Wing Commander Prophecy, which, they promised all along, was to have multiplayer support, but didn't.

SONY

A computer monitor so advanced it even
adjusts itself for changes in temperature.



PLATINUM
SERIES

When the engineers at Sony, being the fastidious people they are, discovered how little things like changes in temperature could distort a monitor's picture, they promptly invented a way to correct it. They also invented a way to correct the distortion caused by the earth's magnetic field, and a unique feature called Digital Multiscan II, which continually assesses and sharpens a screen's image. All this, combined with Sony's applauded Trinitron technology, will give you the ultimate tool for improving your company's image. For a brochure call 1800 226 429. **It's a Sony**



The Third Time's The Charm

If you haven't mastered Quake II fully yet, better hurry. Quake overlord John Carmack has spilled the beans: Work on Quake III is under way. The game will sport a brand-new graphics engine, with play on top of the engine developed for id's anticipated Trinity game project. Carmack says QIII will also require next-generation hardware acceleration to handle 24-bit colour, so start saving for that Voodoo 2 card now.

You Knew It Had To Happen

First, it was Duke Nukem going to the silver screen (see last month's U.S. News column). Now comes word of the long-rumored Tomb Raider move to the movies. Paramount has



announced that our heroine Lara Croft will leap from PC and PlayStation to a cinema near you, with producers Lawrence Gordon and Lloyd Levin, the team behind the recent hit Boogie Nights, overseeing development

Cartman on PC

"Oh, my God! Now you can kill Kenny!" That's how Acclaim broke the news: The latest rage on TV, South Park, will be coming to a PC near you next year. Acclaim has inked a deal with Trey Parker and Matt Stone, the pair behind the manic bunch of foulmouthed kids, to port the franchise to computers in 1999. Acclaim marketing VP Steve Lux noted that South Park "is not your average, politically correct animated comedy" and adds that it'll be "great fodder for creating mature-rated video games." No kidding, Steve.



Riven, Indeed

Well, the Miller brothers sure know how to name a game. Rand and Robyn Miller, the sibling team behind the 5 million units of game sales known as Myst and Riven, have amicably parted ways; Robyn Miller is leaving the brothers' firm, Cyan, to form a new start-up called Land of Point. A Cyan spokesman says Robyn, the writing half of the brotherly partnership that started in their home garage, wants to concentrate on story work for computer-generated film projects; that may include film work based on the Myst franchise. No word on how they broke the news to Mom and Dad.



on the live-action flick. It's still too early to say who'll end up playing Lara (all we'll say is that we think Sandra Bullock looks just like her), but don't bet on Rhona Mitra, the deposed live Lara whom Eidos used for trade shows for a while.

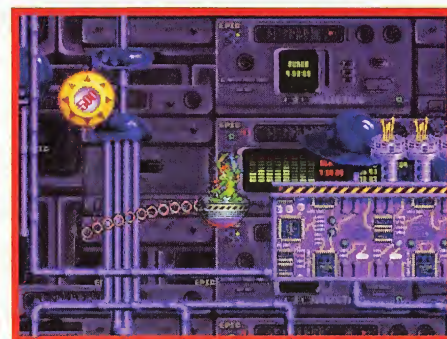
The Company That Wouldn't Die

It just has to be Atari, right? Right. The granddaddy of video games has yet another lease on life after being bought by a Hasbro subsidiary, HIACXI, which plans to mount an attempt to bring such legacy games as Centipede and Missile Command to the PC. Don't nec-

essarily bet against them succeeding, either; Hasbro's latest figures show the update of another mouldy oldie, Frogger, to be a smash hit with sales of around 225,000. These people understand legacy titles.

Get That Bunny!

And you thought side-scrollers were dead. Not true! Epic MegaGames is readying Jazz Jackrabbit 2, which updates the popular blasting bunnies Jazz and Spaz with 3D environments, dynamic lighting, multiplayer (including SideWinder Gamepad daisy-chain support and Internet head-to-head play), and level editing to devise your own levels. Look for the shareware release now over the net at www.epicgames.com, with a full release pegged to late spring.





Take 2 takes over

The biggest news in the UK, in industry terms, has been the purchase of BMG Interactive by Take 2 Interactive. Having survived a bloody period about a year and a half ago, BMG Interactive seemed to have pulled itself out of the mire with the help of the awesome Grand Theft Auto in particular. Take 2 Interactive, meanwhile, has had precious few successes and received a deserved chorus of opprobrium after publishing 1997's undoubted turkey of the year, Postal. We now know more about Take 2 Interactive than we did before - namely, that it is the biggest dark horse of the UK games publishing community.

Eidos beats God

Cruel speculation has surrounded the establishment of Gathering of Developers (or GoD), the publisher formed by ex-id Software and, more recently, ex-Ion Storm man Mike Wilson. The rumours have been



going like this - Ion Storm will sign for GoD once it has fulfilled its contractual obligations for Eidos (it has signed a multi-game deal) and churned out a number of games with the emphasis on speed rather than quality. These rumours, it would appear, are rubbish - at least if Ion Storm's Todd Porter, recently in the UK to preview

Ion Storm's first title, battle-strat Dominion, is to be believed. Porter was quite unequivocal in stating that Ion Storm thinks Wilson has got it all wrong and won't have anything to do with GoD. Which is good news for Eidos. Meanwhile, Epic Megagames is crowing about the fact that Ion Storm has committed itself to

building Daikatana 2 around the Unreal engine. If Daikatana 2 is a year late, you'll know the reason...

Lara on TV...sort of

For future reference, it's worth remembering that, according to Eidos, Lara Croft's birthday is Valentine's Day, February 14. It revealed this, infuriatingly, on February 13. Not that Tomb Raider II needs much more publicity - it's still riding high in the charts (am I the only person in the world who thinks it's about as much fun to play as a wet haddock?). Rhona Mitra, once the physical representation of Lara until she split acrimoniously with Eidos late last year, has resurfaced on the Pepsi Chart Show, on the country's newest and least-watched TV station, Channel 5. As a result, we now have a weekly demonstration of the manifest lack of talent and charisma which caused Eidos to give her the boot her the boot.

Braveheart games

Scotland launched itself as a hotbed of games development at last year's E3 Show, and the group of developers which have banded together to form the Scottish Games Alliance, seem to be going from strength to strength. Future titles to look out for from the land of haggis, tatties and neeps include: Red Lemon's Aironauts, a futuristic shooter with a Running Man-style plot, which the company describes as "Pilot Wings with guns," and one of the first Katana titles from the same company; a whole host of titles



from DMA of Grand Theft Auto fame including Attack, "In which Millwall supporters meet Jurassic Park," (Millwall being a football club in the East End of London which attracts a notoriously violent following), and GBH - the working title for the sequel to GTA, battle-strat Clan Wars; and Creative Edge's hilarious casino sim Casino Kit, which, among other things, lets you put chicks working behind the bar in order to get your punters drunk and thereby even keener to chuck their hard-earned money away. If you've ever wanted to know what a voxel is (just think 3D sprites), Scottish company Voxar has designed a game called Tumblebugs which showcases its voxel technology, which you can buy from its Website (www.tumblebugs.com). Look out, too, for titles next year from start-up developers Silicon Fish and I-Design. Och aye....

SUBSCRIBE

WHY YOU SHOULD SUBSCRIBE

Why would you want to subscribe, you ask? Why wouldn't you? Not only do you get PC PowerPlay each month delivered right to your door, at up to 35% off the price the commoners pay and earlier than everyone else, but you also can win some huge mothers of prizes. Just imagine reclining in your comfy computer chair, playing all the latest games on your new and free top end computer, with the money you've saved jingling in your pockets, reading PC PowerPlay and checking out the demos before everyone else.

THE EXTRA-SEXY WHY YOU SHOULD SUBSCRIBE

And this month we've got one hell of a system to give away, thanks to those fine people at the Gamesmen. Go on, have a glance down at the system specs now. Yep, that's right - it comes with an Obsidian 3Dfx, the same kind of card used in arcade machines! Think about how good your games will look with a card of that magnitude, think about how much dosh you'll save, think about getting PC PowerPlay before everyone else, and then think about filling out that subs form at the bottom of the page.

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HOW TO

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NSW 2016

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• use the tear out card provided in this issue

If you're not sure about something, call us on
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or email
games_subs@next.com.au

PLEASE DDN'T...

Send subscription cheques and forms in the same envelope as competition entries. No comp. mail is actually opened - that's why we ask you to write the answer on the back, you see...

ISSUE #22 WINNER

(20" Sony Trinitron monitor. You lucky, lucky person)

Cameron Hayes,
Moura QLD

PLUS FREE GAMES CD!

We've managed to talk Metro Games into giving us 1000 Blue Byte demo CDs. Each has playable demos of Incubation, Extreme Assault, Archimedean Dynasty, Settlers 2, Albion and much more. While stocks last we'll be sending one to each new subscriber and renewer.

BLUE BYTE DEMO DISK



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REDFERN NSW 2016

PC PowerPlay

024

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Terms & Conditions: 1. Entry is open to all residents of Australia except employees and the immediate families of Next Publishing and its agencies associated with the promotion. Only entries completed on the official entry form and completed with these Terms and Conditions will be eligible. 2. Competition begins April 22, 1998 and entries close at midnight June 3, 1998. 3. Only one entry per person is permitted. 4. In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5. Winners will be drawn at 9.00am on June 4, 1998 at 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW. 6. Prize must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7. Total prize value is \$4000. 8. Winners will be notified by phone &/or mail and the results published in the Weekend Australian Newspaper on the 6/6/98. 9. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ACN 002 645647 of 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW, 2016.



Ultimate Gaming BEAST

We have a winner!

Never has there been a prize as sumptuously grand as this. Never have the number of competition entries we've received been so numerous. Never have competition questions been so hard...

When PC PowerPlay and PlayNOW launched The Beast competition, we figured that since we were giving away a \$15,000 mother of a PC with the sexiest set of peripherals in existence, that we'd need to make you work a little for it. So we made the questions hard. The first part question was

set to test your technical knowledge (the Intel question), with the second part designed to sort the hard core gamers from the casual players (the Wing Commander question).

Well readers, you've done us proud. The number of entries we received was stunning. Friendly workers in our office, suffering from a low work-ethic, and visiting the PowerPlay office because it's a cool place to hang out, regularly commented

"Gosh, what a lot of competition entries!", while we ourselves would gasp at the hugeness of the mailbag everyday, exclaiming "gosh, what a lot of competition entries." Similarly, slow net times of late have been the singular result of the traffic hitting the PlayNOW site to enter online.

Drum roll please...

To the thousands of losers; we're just sorry that we don't have a Beast for each of you, but one guy is sure to be very happy with the result -

Mr Adrian Womack
You outrageously lucky bastard!

Think of us while you power-play on The Beast, and if you don't buy every single issue of PC PowerPlay from now on we're sending the boys around to secretly replace The Beast with a

Macintosh.

And in closing, we'd like to say...

A big'n'hearty thanks too, to PlayNOW, our partners in this venture. We can now reveal the secret purpose of this competition - to hasten the degradation of rainforest timber by doubling the paper envelope requirements of the nation, as well as boosting revenues for Australia Post, with whom we have a substantial investment. It was all wildly successful, so we're reinvesting our

Australia Post profits into the running of future competitions which should clear the Daintree National Park of those pesky trees once and for all.

Question 2 Answers

Q. Name all Kilrathi combat ships from Wing Commander 1 through to 4, including mission disks.

Wing Commander

Salthei (Light Fighter)
Dralthi (Medium Fighter)
Krant (Medium Fighter)
Hhriss (Medium Fighter)
Gratha (Heavy Fighter)
Jalthi (Heavy Fighter)
Ralari (Destroyer)
Fralthi (Cruiser)
Sivar (Dreadnaught)

Wing Commander II:

Vengeance of the Kilrathi
Sartha (Light Fighter)
Drakhri (Medium Fighter)
Jalkehi (Heavy Fighter)
Grikath (Heavy Fighter)
Gothri (Heavy Fighter)
Ralatha (Destroyer)
Fralthra (Cruiser)
Strakha (Medium Stealth Fighter)

Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger

Darket (Light Fighter)
Dralthi IV (Medium Fighter)
Vaktoth (Heavy Fighter)
Strakha (Stealth Fighter)
Paktahn (Torpedo Bomber)
Ekapshi (Light Atmospheric Fighter)
K Ha Haf (Heavy Fighter)
Sorthak (Superheavy Fighter)
Bloodfang (Superfighter)
Cruiser
Light Destroyer
Heavy Destroyer
Dreadnaught

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom

Dralthi (Medium Fighter)

Wing Commander Armada

Dralthi (Light Fighter)
Shok'lar (Medium Fighter)
Jrathek (Medium Fighter)
Kor-lark (Heavy Fighter)
Goran (Heavy Fighter)

Wing Commander Privateer

Dralthi (Medium Fighter)
Gothri (Heavy Fighter)

Note: Only "Combat" ships are included, transports, corvettes, bases etc have been excluded.



COMPETITIONS

Rebellion

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.

All entries close May 23, 1997

Entries to:

PC PowerPlay, 78 Renwick st.
Redfern NSW 2016



Star Wars Rebellion

If you're a fan of turn based empire management and strategy sims, then you could do a lot worse than take a look at Rebellion from Lucas Arts. It's a bit like Moo2, except in the Star Wars universe, with all the planets, all the characters, and you can play as either the Empire or the Alliance. It's a game full of depth with a multitude of options, and plenty of micro management to keep you occupied whilst you build up a fleet to go and beat the crap out of

Emperor Palpatine, and that's all anyone wants in a game, really, isn't it? Check out the full review on page 74, but thanks to the people at Metro Games, we've got 6 copies to give away.

Q. What did Lando Calrissian's co-pilot, Neia Numb, really say during the final attack on the Death Star?

Digital Edge F1 Sim compact driving wheel

The original Digital Edge wheel was a beautiful, if

expensive, solution to your PC driving needs. There is now a compact cut down model available, and though it hasn't quite reached the level of perfection we all dream about in a driving wheel, it's still a very respectable driving device, with the all important buttons on the wheel itself, as well as paddles situated behind the wheel for Formula 1 style gear changes. Add to this the sturdy and practical base of the wheel which allows for the monitor to be placed atop it and ensures that the wheel will stay where it should without the need for ugly and obtrusive clamps, and you've got yourself a pretty nice driving wheel. Mindflux, importers and distributors of all things cool have been nice enough to give us two to give away, so take a stab at the question below.

Q. Name three drivers who have switched from Formula 1 to Indy Car.

Issue # 22 winners Free stuff for you!

TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

ANSWER: TOLEMAN

M. Nicoski. Mt Hawthorn, W.A.
T. Fell. East Keilor, VIC
A. Kwok. Normanhurst, N.S.W.
P. Harvey. Mt Barker, S.A.
T. Sullivan. Mill Park, VIC

BATTLEZONE

ANSWER: ATARI

L. Miskin. Te Anau, N.Z.
T. Ranger. Armidale, VIC
P. Brooks. Mt Isa, QLD
M. Kitching. Ballajura, W.A.
B. Dickens. Kincumber, N.S.W.
B. Cotterell-Jones. Summerland Pt, NSW

F22 RAPTOR

ANSWER: McDONNELL DOUGLAS
F-15 EAGLE

M. KINGHORN. CRAIGMORE, S.A.
L. MILLBURN. BALGOWLAH, NSW
R. BUTLER. BUGALDIE, NSW
J. KAUTTO. ADAMSTOWN, NSW
P. EAGLES. FERTREE GULLY, VIC
A. STONE. THORNBURY, VIC

UPRISING

ANSWER: THE M4 'SHERMAN'
TANK

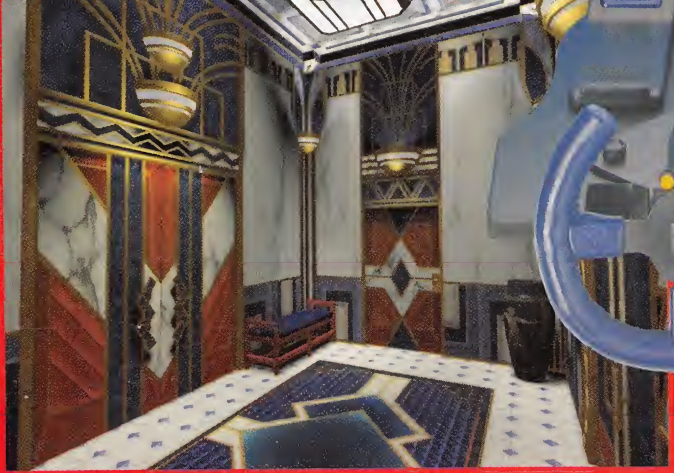
S. Cosherill. Cheltenham, VIC
G. Gilmour. Mooloolah, QLD
P. Moss. Albury, NSW
S. Payne. Werribee, VIC
T. Sherlock. Frankston, VIC
G. Barnier. Oxley, QLD

The Black Dahlia

Take 2 Interactive are beginning to show just how good 'Interactive movies' can be and their latest extravaganza, The Black Dahlia, is one of the best of the genre ever. It comes on a massive 8 CD's, is chock full of photo-realistic scenery, interesting puzzles and clues to pursue, a labyrinthine plot, and capable actors (including the legendary Dennis Hopper, Teri Garr, and Darren Eiker). Turn to page 84 for our full review, but to get your hands on a free copy of your very own you'll have to answer the question below, because we've got 8 copies to give away, thanks to the kind people at Directsoft.

Q. According to James Ellroy, who was the Torso Slayer?

The Black Dahlia





IT'S OUR BIRTHDAY!

PC PowerPlay is 2 years old and this is the party. Come on in, grab a drink and watch our life flash before your eyes.

Sure, this is a self-serving, trumpet blowing exercise in public grandstanding, but, so what? When given the opportunity, most hardworking, repressed soldiers of the workforce would happily take an opportunity to stand up and say "they everybody, we're really good", this is ours, so here it is!

Why we are

Everyone who writes for PC PowerPlay is a hardcore PC gamer and lover of technology. All are professional writers, but none write about anything but games.

Two and a half years ago, we, as well as most of you, turned either to the excellent multiplatform mag *Hyper* for its PC game coverage, or the UK and US imports. Of course, it wasn't enough. PC games are inherently different to console games, as are the people who play each. Australia needed a mature, dedicated PC games mag to meet the needs of the gamers, and just as importantly, to cover the rapidly emerging Australian game development scene.

At the time I was Deputy Ed. Of *Hyper*, having been a games freelancer for a few years before that. Being a PC gamer, and having to review endless sidescrolling beat 'em ups on the Megadrive was steadily driving me insane. Soon, instead of saying "good morning" to people at Next Publishing, I started blubbering "we

need a PC mag" in the manner of a drunk telling a cab driver where he lives at 4am. As fate would have it, Stuart Clarke, the then Editor of *Hyper*, and Phil Keir, the Publisher, were thinking along similar lines (but articulating their thoughts with more clarity...). Thus, PC PowerPlay was born.

No more would the PC gamers of Australia and New Zealand have to pay \$15 or more for 3-4 month old game news from overseas! We were determined to be at least as good as the O/S mags - better if possible. These UK and US mags all had several things in common which annoyed me as a reader; there were too many ads for a start - from the outset we have been determined to keep the ratio way in favour of editorial, so, we get more ads in a month than usual, we just go up in size to keep it a good read. Then there was the whole personality cult thing. Each new issue of a UK mag seemed to have a whole new set of photos of the staff doing wacky stuff. Each page had a pic of some bloke making a face, taking up valuable game-talk space and giving the "reviewer" cause to use the word "I" just a little too often. Our reviews are, on average, longer than theirs, we have more screenshots and they're bigger. So there.

A cover CD was, naturally, essential. The brief for this part was easy - the CD Editor was told "fill it", making sure there were as many utilities as possible too.

Diary Of A Reviewer

Over the past couple of years, we've received a hell of a lot of mail from people wanting to know just what it takes to be a PowerPlay reviewer. Well, you're about to find out. David Wildgoose has agreed to fill you all in on what really happens, as long as we promise not to use his name

2.30pm. Wake up after a hard night's gaming. Phone rings. Ben yells down the line, "I've been ringing all day! Where the hell have you been?!"

3.15pm. Arrive at Powerplay office. Collect new game for review. Immediately open box and pocket brown envelope full of cash found inside. Gareth remarks, "Only \$2000! Don't they want a Gold Award?!" We all laugh in an evil fashion and caress our payola lovingly.

3.30pm. Distributor rings to ask how the review of another game is coming along. Ever the professional, Ben replies, "Terrific game! You're looking at 90% plus, that's for sure! However, there may be a problem, we were thinking of putting it on the cover, but something else came..." [Pauses, then grins.] "No, I'm sure you already have my account number. Yeah, 10 grand is fine."

4.00pm. Stop by second hand games store on the way home. Sell brand new game meant for review for a tidy sum.

5.00pm. Read through press release that came with game. Grimace, and realise that the back of the box would have been better (and shorter).

7.00pm. Having made no progress on review, decide to log on to Net for "quick game" of Quake - using old review copy, natch!

11.38am. Check out newsgroups for info on game for review. End up involved in flame war with Derek Smart about why he's spending all his time in newsgroups and not doing any real work. Fail to appreciate the irony.

4.27am. Still haven't started review. Spent last three hours multi-playing Championship Manager 2 instead.

4.30am. Get sacked as Manchester United manager after deliberately leading them to relegation. Remember that Ben wanted the review done by the morning.

4.32am. Nearly open up Microsoft Word. Spy old review copy of Seven Kingdoms lying on desk. Load it up for yet another "quick game".

9.19am. Wake up with head face down on keyboard. Sit up and discover space bar still attached to chin. Look at watch - forty minutes to go!

9.25am. Log on to Net again. Visit two or three game sites and cut-and-paste bits of their reviews together. Steal any grabs found there also. Write own lame, final paragraph, "If you like this sort of thing, check it out!"

10.00am. Email Ben with the review. Taking a break from snorting cocaine off Sporty Spice's athletic stomach, he emails back instantly, "What the hell took you so long! I've got another game for you...!"

TIME LINE 1996

May

Powerplay launches with news of perhaps the two most important developments in gaming this decade - 3d accelerator cards and Quake. Unfortunately we failed to realise that putting a dozen grabs in a straight line across the page looked pretty stupid.

June

Percentage scores replace ye olde marks out of ten. We implement a CD Guide lift-out due to popular demand - did anyone ever actually pull them out?

July

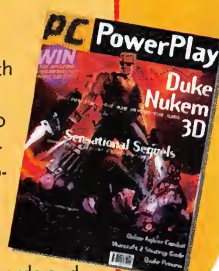
3D cards arrive! But there are no games to play...

August

Our first full review of Quake - but it took us a while to warm to the magnificence.

September Online only gaming comes of age with Ultima Online and some other RPGs no one has heard of since. Malcolm begins his reign of terror as Art Director

October We review Quake, again. We liked it even better this time around.



Issue #1

We launched issue #1 of PC PowerPlay with the following mission statement:

"This is PC PowerPlay. Our aim is to bring you a complete source of PC game coverage each month. The best reviewers in the country will tell you what the games are really like, our technical and feature writers will keep you up to date with the rapidly moving world of games technology and each month, the cover CD will have playable demos of the newest and hottest games.

We're Australian too. Our local games industry is surprisingly large and for the first time, will get the attention it deserves. Being Australian doesn't mean being out of date though, PC PowerPlay will have news and reviews in each issue you'd have to wait months to read about in an imported magazine. We'll try and do a better job at it too.

As proud as we are of the first issue, we know we'll only get better in time. Games are evolving more rapidly now than at any time in the past, we'll keep pace and because of that, so will you by reading PC PowerPlay."

Today

Today we rule. Our readership is higher than many mainstream womens mags and our ratio of love to hate letters is about 100-1. That's the important bit - not how many mags we sell, but that those that buy it like it. That's you. Readers of PC PowerPlay from the very beginning will have seen the mag's style evolve through many changes. We're taking it easy on the design overhauls now, for we believe we have come up with the right recipe of games and technology to keep you in the loop.

In our 2 years we've met and interviewed many of the industry's leading figures, we've reviewed every single game released into the Australian market in our time - except the 2-3 games a certain publisher was too scared to send us because they thought we might not like it... We've also earned the trust and respect of the industry (well, most of them).

Most importantly, I believe we've earned your trust and respect. We won't go throwing that out the window either. Stick around, the ride has only just begun.

Ben



November MMX arrives on the scene. KKND revolutionises the real-time strategy genre.

December We start to hear about this new-fangled technology called DVD. Red Alert revolutionises the real-time strategy genre.

1997

January
One word:
Lara.

February / March
We benchtest the 3Dfx and PowerVR. We liked, we liked.

April The meteoric rise of 3D games, notably GL Quake and Tomb Raider, prompted the introduction of our 3D Tech News column. Under the authorship of the enigmatic Jere, it has grown from a single page to the five page extravaganza it is now.

May Powerplay itself took the step into 3D this month by switching from staples to perfect binding. Perfect - how appropriate!

June We make fun of consoles, and incur the wrath of the pigtailed Dan from Hyper. One of the more significant movements of the year came with all the additions for Quake. Team Fortress and Capture The Flag have steered multi-player gaming in a new direction.

July Derek Smart tells us why he spends all his time in news-groups. Dark Reign revolutionises the real-time strategy genre

August
The Carnage-geddon furore hits.

MEET THE TEAM

We asked each of the lads to spin 80 words on "what they're all about". That was the easy bit. Then we asked for a pic of their head... Now you know why we've kept them safely hidden away all these years.

GEORGE ARGY



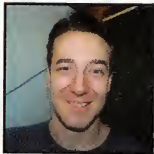
Wolfenstein, Quake2, Falcon

80 words eh? OK: Ministry, Metallica, 80's Madonna,

4.0, Cohiba cigars, Wild Turkey, Nissan Patrol, William Gibson, Fargo, Star Wars, Stargate, Three Colors: Blue, Paulina Porizkova, Veruca Salt, thai, Jolt, Doritos, steak, the colour puce, cheese, cheap band-

width, The Terminator, Isabelle Adjani (drool, drool), LAN parties, paintball, sleep, baseball, Linux, Duckman, Cappuccino Flakes (where the hell did they go?), cash, Pentium II's, Warplane Magazine (where the hell did it go?), Aliens, Nirvana, DOS 3.0, COMX 35, 21" monitors, karting, Bigfoot Pizzas.

ASHTON MILLS



I spent my youth addicted to console machines (ZX

Spectrum, C64), avoiding homework and scrounging enough cash to get by on my gaming addiction. Uni was no different when I entered programming, but I took an interest in developing my writing passion when I realised what an incredibly boring job being a programmer is. Then, like an alcohol-induced revelation, I heard the call of magazines and set about writing for a number of publications.

BEN MANSILL



Computer games allow for the most tangible realisation of otherwise

unattainable fantasies. That's why I play 'em. And 'cos they look cool. My parents wouldn't let me get a C64, said it would destroy my social skills and general motivation. They were right and I still don't forgive them. Eventually got an Amiga 500, which I mind-melded with. Mmm.. Carrier Command... Took an entire

year off work to play Falcon 3.0, then another for Civilization. Here I am now, and so are you.

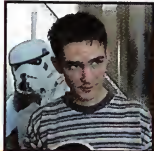
GARETH JONES



Left school, ditched uni at first attempt, went to Cairns and

worked in a nightclub for two years, destroyed liver. Came back to Sydney and ended up managing cocktail bar in hotel. Eventually went back to uni, almost finished, started writing for this new games mag, got offered deputy's position, accepted. Love football, play in 3 teams (2 outdoor, 1 indoor). Have long orange sideburns, appalling dress sense, and am cynical about everything. There, now you know me.

DAVID WILDGOOSE



I am a computer-generated illusion, a cyborg simulacra, engi-

neered by the Powerplay Institute For Artificial Intelligence And Slave Labour. Graduating with a degree in Applied Gaming Theory, I wrote an acclaimed paper entitled Postmodern Functional Aesthetics: Why Twinsen's Car Is Really Really Cool! Oh, and I'm 23, single, and my favourite Spice Girl is "Posh" Victoria. Since you asked.

GARRY WALLIS



One day Garry's old man gave unto him a Sinclair ZX Spectrum.

Garry then progressed to the next phase, buying the much coveted Commodore 64, and then on to the Amiga where he decided to join a crack band of individuals known as DECAY, who programmed technology demos and even had one featured on Tonight Live with Steve Vizard. He now is a system administrator and has no fun except writing technical articles for the greatest games magazine on the planet.

HENDRY SAUNDERS



Age: 37
Occupation: Retired
Golf
Handicap: 9
Quake Nick: "Jihad"

I'm probably the exception to the rule of Powerplay contributors, that is I don't wear baseball caps backwards, and I am the least likely member of the team to be seen carrying a skateboard about! I'm an average retired bloke, in the twilight of my career (mergers and acquisitions contracting), and games provide me with intellectual challenge and to some extent, a social excursion. Look out if you see me in TeamFortress or TA Online!

JERE LAWRENCE



I joined because I love computer games and secondly because I

desperately wanted to get in the door of a games company as a designer. Well 2 years on, I'm no closer to realising my goal as a designer but am very proud of all that we've achieved here at Powerplay. As for me I'm 25 years old, am Astrologically a Gemini (which might explain a little too much) and actually spend most of my spare time playing games. I became involved in computer gaming journalism primarily because I love computer games and secondly because I desperately wanted to get in the door of a games company as a designer. I absolutely love to talk about anything, absolutely anything.

MAJ. IAN LINDGREN



I joined the Army in 1981 and am currently a student for one year at

Army Command and Staff College at Fort Queenscliff, Victoria. My hobbies include running, Rugby Union and riding an old 1935 500cc Ariel motorcycle. Playing PC games is my destructive outlet, and it's safer than the real thing! My favourite games

are Longbow2 and C&C, which I play at home on my 3 station LAN against my two sons, aged 11 and 13.

PETER SHARPE



After months of respectable looking photos of "Baby Face" Ben,

the rest of the motley crew here at Powerplay are at last revealed. I won't dare make fun of my freaky looking brothers in arms due to the distinct possibility of my photo resembling a mug shot from Australia's Most Wanted. My story be a simple one. Ever since the age of 10 when I discovered that I could shoot aliens with the use of an Atari and my family TV, I was hooked.

SPOONMAN



Well, you already know all the fundamentals due to my freaky

induction to this institution of gaming excellence. So what else is there to know? No, I don't always look like this photo. Yes I was the one you saw driving around Newcastle with "Ten Ton Hammer" playing too damn loud for my crappy car stereo system. And Yes I play Quake2 far too much for my own good. Tip; eat your teeth, brush your vegies and wear Sunscreen..... Ahh crap, verbal Diarrhoea

MALCOLM



Otherwise known as art-droid PC-AD3. I underwent several

years training in Moving Pictures & Words Around before joining the elite team you see on this page. I've been playing games since those Invaders from Space landed, but have recently played nothing but Quake & Final Fantasy VII. I love my job, especially when Ben lets me fill up arty white space with big pictures of Quake monsters. Mmm...shamblers

EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING

Saitek X36



The Saitek X36 is the ultimate in flight simulation control.

Whether you're flying a Boeing 747 or an F22, the X36's massive array of features gives you the edge in any situation.

The 'point & click' Windows Interface makes programming easy, bringing over 250 game functions to your fingertips.

Developed by an award winning team, the sculptured design and high grip finish make the X36 a pleasure to use - even on long haul flights.

The X36 - so good, it's even better than the real thing.

Features include:

- **Stick** - 2x 8-way Hat Switches, 3x Fire Buttons. Trigger, Missile Launcher with Safety Cover, Function Modifier 'Pinkie' Switch with LED.
- **Throttle** - Detents, Rudder Control, 2x Rotary Controls, 4-way Hat Switch, 2x 3-Way Switches, Mouse Emulator, 2x Fire Buttons, 3x Mode Status LEDs.
- Over 250 Programmable Commands
- Easy to use Windows Programming Interface.

» Comes Pre-Programmed for Microsoft® Flight Simulator.

X36 Throttle & Stick System available for under \$299. Separates just \$199.

(Non-programmable version \$149)

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Ben gets his mug on TV, females everywhere go wild, and a crap game gets our cover. 3d sound hits the marketplace in the form of Diamond's Monster Sound - still the leader in 3d sound today.

September Ben whinges about online manuals as opposed to real ones, and the response both from readers and developers was astounding (and still is) - we seem to have touched a nerve with that one.

October We take a look at the latest from Intel - 500MHz Pentiums, and drool a lot. Age Of Empires revolutionises the real-time strategy genre.



November We discover a weird guy who calls himself Spoonman, and despite his theory about Telstra vans, eventually employ him. Total Annihilation receives the highest score we've ever given with an almighty 98%. And, of course, revolutionises the real-time strategy genre. Can anyone spot a pattern here?



December Blade Runner finally arrives, and Jere becomes even more enthusiastic than usual, which we had previously thought impossible. We take our first look at Quake 2, and become suitably impressed.

3D ACCELERATORS

The biggest thing in the last two years

Not to blow our own trumpets, but here at Powerplay we were excited about the coming of 3D accelerators all the way back in issue 3. Back then we didn't really know much about them, but we knew they'd be good. We predicted they would revolutionise gaming as we knew it and you could say we were pretty spot on.

Since then we have seen the rise of the 3D accelerator and things have just been changing so quickly and so dramatically. The first card we had the opportunity to review was the 3D Blaster back at the end of 96. It was Rendition based and supposed to be the card. It had all the news, all the hype, and as we discovered, all the problems too.

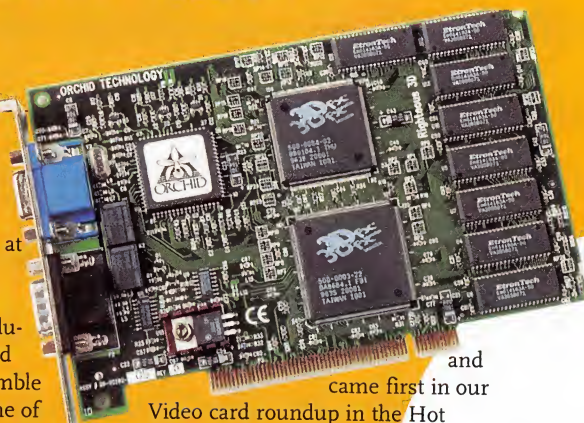
There was no doubt that we were impressed with what we saw. It was our first taste of bi-linear filtering and Quake looked and played better then could ever be imagined. Even Monster Truck Madness, which was our real world test was running at a speed that we weren't ready for. Things started great with the Rendition but as we were to discover it had some rather serious problems with Dos Support. Modes under 640 x 480 would run appallingly. Also it was fast, but it wasn't quite what everyone expected. There wasn't a faultlessly smooth frame rate, instead there was a slight jerkiness that was hard to ignore. The first 3D accelerator wasn't delivering.

Along then came the 3Dfx and the Power VR which really heated the 3D accelerated world up. With the arrival of the 3Dfx, any ideas that 3D acceleration would not be the most

purchased item of hardware since the sound card was laid to rest. The 3Dfx performed in ways we just weren't ready for, at the time, fully texture mapped, high resolution, refractive, reflective translucent objects were rendered in real time upon our humble PC's. Not only that but one of the original 3Dfx demo's was to render and animate a 3D studio object in real time. It was amazing and short of an arcade, we'd never seen such incredible graphics before. The new era of gaming was upon us and we were excited.

It was at this time, most interestingly that the Power VR also surfaced. Our first 3D conundrum had arrived. On one end of the scale was the 3Dfx which offered fast graphics (limited to 640 x 480) with translucency and bilinear filtering. On the other side however was the Power VR also offering fast graphics but could render at a resolution of 800 x 600. It could not however perform any form of bi-linear filtering but instead offered real time light sources and subsequently a form of real time ray tracing. The application that really won it for the Power VR though was Ultimate Race. An amazing racing experience it offered high resolution fast racing action with a colour depth that was far superior to the 3Dfx, just without the bi-linear filtering.

Since then, the Apocalypse 5D has surfaced which incorporates an ET6000 2D chipset with the Power VR(2) that did offer bilinear filtering. It was an extremely worthy card



and came first in our Video card roundup in the Hot Hardware guide. For the first time Videologic/Power VR had one over 3Dfx. The only competition to the 5D was 3Dfx's Rush chipset which was 3Dfx that rendered it's 3D in a window. The only problem was that the Rush chipset was that it was slightly slower than the Voodoo card and also suffered from some serious incompatibilities.

Heading into the future now we can see that the 3Dfx Voodoo range is the dominant 3D accelerator. S3/ATI and a host of other companies tried and failed. 3D acceleration wasn't a whimsical trendy choice as some companies thought. Instead consumers wanted high quality super fast 3D and only one card could provide that. What we're observing now from this is a most interesting shift in Video card production. Manufacturers are now incorporating new kinds of 2D functionality such as Video in and DVD into their cards leaving the 3D to the more dominant Voodoo range. With the Voodoo 2 and SLI mode (allowing for 2 cards to double performance) the future will see us having 3 separate PCI cards to run our Video. Cool huh!

Jere Lawrence

AND NOW, THE PRESENT!

What are birthdays really about? Warmth? Love? Togetherness? Like

hell! It's presents!!! And have we got a present for you! (Yes, we understand that it's OUR birthday and it's US that should be getting presents, but the warmth, love and togetherness we get from you lot is all we want...).

Because they love and we love them (this is the PC PowerPlay Love Page), Creative Pacific have jumped into the birthday spirit and donated the BLASTER PC. It's kinda spanky, in fact, of all the PCs we've given away of late THIS is among the best. Fast and friendly to use, with the 6Mb power of the Pure 3D 3Dfx, the pumping bass of the Cambridge PC Works, the brilliant Permedia 2-based Graphics Blaster Exxtreme and the sparkly AWE 64. Nice machine huh? It can be yours! Just answer this typically simple PC PowerPlay competition question and send it to: **PC PowerPlay, 78 Renwick st. Redfern NSW 2016**

Q. Who was the third man to step foot on the moon?

ONLINE GAMES

The other biggest thing in the last two years

Two years of PowerPlay, if you've been reading since the beginning you'll know that the mag has come a long way, and another thing which has come a long way is Online gaming. Back then we were playing four player Doom games, now there is a whole world to be explored, with charts, tables, and a whole system on interrelated components all joining together to form a ridiculously rich environment to waste your mates. Now is a good time to play games online.

Two years ago ISDN was a dirty word because if you had a connection at anything like that sort of speed you probably had something to do with the government, an underground organisation or sometimes both. Now there are people around with Cable modems, Satellite connections and who knows what else. The funny thing is, if you ask just about any one of them why they have that sort of power, it's not for work or education, it's for games. What is this world coming to?

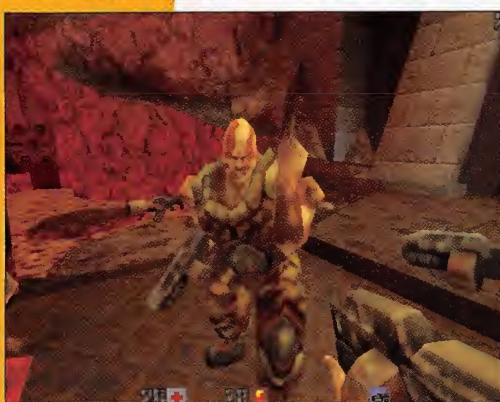
If you look way back to PCPP #2 you'll see that gaming on the net was not always quite as easy as it is today. Kali while being a masterful piece of software can be a bit of a pain to get happening properly. It was, however a taste of things to come. You've heard it all before, but the contribution Quake has made to gaming on the net is massive. Even if you don't like the game it has still affected you in some way or another if you indulge in a bit of friend destruction. Quake was the first true "net friendly" action game and it really showed us what we

should be using the net for, gaming in its finest form. Since then we've seen an explosion of new games which all utilise the net to provide the finest hour, the hour of Multiplayer madness. If you want to realise how far we've come Look at X-Wing vs TIE Fighter, would anyone have even dreamt two years ago that they could sell a game based almost entirely on multiplay? Not a hope. Then there's Ultima Online, anyone suggesting that would have been carted to the Loony Bin. Now they are here, and they are successful, Mega successful. Back then multiplayer facilities were added while they had a spare minute waiting for the paint on the box to dry, now it seems multiplayer is often the top priority, and it shows.

Our attitudes to these games have also changed. Once upon a time I remember reading a review which said "It's good in Multiplayer, but then everything is" No it isn't! We are now much more discerning, which can only be a good thing for games, if no one buys them they'll have to get better and so the cycle continues. Where does it stop? Hopefully it won't. What would seem like dumb business decisions two years ago are shaping our future which makes us

wonder what really does lie ahead for Online gaming. Whatever it is we have to have foresight, and not get locked into conventions that won't let us grow in the future. Bill Gates thought 640K would be enough memory for anyone, he had no foresight...and he is now the richest man in the world! If the Online community looks ahead there is no telling where we'll end up, two years is a very long time in gaming and we'll be there for the whole lot.

Rod Spoonman Campbell



1998

January

Information about the Voodoo 2 starts to surface, and every gamer everywhere has the nerds' equivalent of an orgasm. Game of the year for 97/98 is announced, and the winner is deservedly Diablo.



February

Quake 2 finally arrives! We get to meet Paul Steed and Tim Willits, and they turn out to be damned nice guys, and great drinking partners. Professional Gamer Leagues begin to look as if they'll really take off, at least in America.



March

We put together the biggest, fastest, and sexiest gaming PC we possibly can...and then give it away! Jere fills us in on what we're missing out on with Ultima Online, and we all shake our fists at EA for not putting an Asian region server in place. And we tell all about the Starcraft beta test.

April

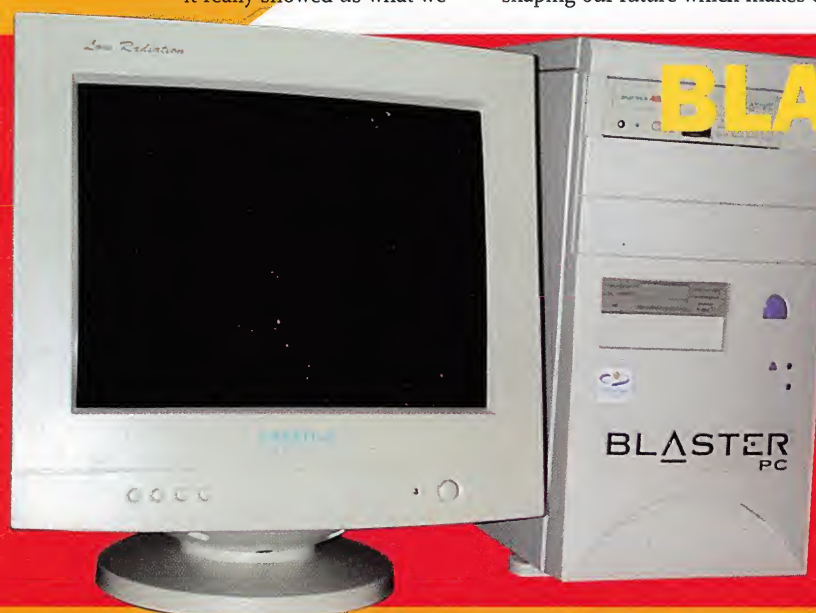
Finally get our hands upon the mother of all 3Dfx cards, the Obsidian range, and are suitably impressed. Intel announces their own version of the 3D chip, and it looks good too. We launch our new cover CD, with its cool HTML interface, and give away even more beastly computers.

May

You are here

BLASTER PC

- PII 233
- 32Mb RAM
- 3 GIG hard drive
- 32 X CD ROM
- AWE 64 sound card
- Graphics Blaster Exxtreme video card (Permedia 2)
- Canopus Pure 3D 6mb 3Dfx
- Cambridge PC works speakers
- 15" monitor





All products (shipping versions) were tested in Windows 95 using Intel® "Portland" (440fx) chipset on Intel Pentium® II 266 MHz MMX CPU, with 512 cache, 32MB EDO DRAM, and 1.6GB hard drive. All products were tested in default settings and were available to the general public at the time of test. 2D test used 3D WinBench 97 business graphics at 1024x768x16bpp at 75 Hz. 3D test was done using 3D WinBench 97 vers.1.0 at 640x480x16bpp at 75Hz. Products tested in 2D and 3D were configured as follows: (Driver vers./date): Diamond VIPER V330 (1.00/8-8-97, BIOS:1.4.9, mem.4MB SGRAM), Matrox Millennium II (3.61.005/5-12-97, BIOS:1.0, mem.14MB WRAM), STB Lightspeed 128 (4.03/06-1-00/1-24-98, BIOS:1.2, mem.4MB MDRAM). Tests performed w/o independent verification by 3D. 2D makes no representations/warranties as to results. The STB Lightspeed 128 accelerates 3D in software only. 3D WinBench is a trademark of 3D Inc. in US and other countries. Windows is a trademark of Microsoft Corp. Pentium is a trademark of Intel Corp. IF-22 is a trademark of Interactive Magic. Moto Racer is a trademark of Delphine Software Int'l. All other brands and names are property of their respective owners. VIPER is a Registered Trademark of Directed Electronics, Inc., Used under License. © 1997 Diamond Multimedia Systems Inc., 2880 Junction Avenue, San Jose, CA 95134. All rights reserved.

Our new
Viper
accelerator
is so fast,
we couldn't get
anyone else
to test it.

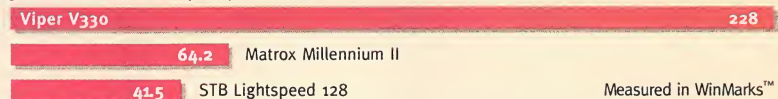
Introducing the true 128-bit accelerator.

- Record-breaking acceleration for Windows® NT and Windows® 95
- Phenomenal 3D frame rates—supports 20 billion operations/second
- Engineered for Direct3D—the most widely-supported game API
- Advanced video features—supports TV-out for big screen computing
- Provides seamless upgradeability to TV tuner, video capture, and DVD
- Bundled with 8 hot business and gaming software titles, including iF-22™: The Realistic Simulation of the F-22 Raptor and Moto Racer

2D Acceleration



3D Acceleration (with quality check on)



Measured in WinMarks™



Get ready to think fast with the ultimate 2D, 3D, and video accelerator. Diamond Multimedia's amazing new 128-bit Viper® V330 leaves all those 64-bit cards and the other "so called"

128-bit cards in the dust. The Viper, powered by NVIDIA's RIVA 128 chip, blazes through the most complex 2D business graphics with its huge 1.6GB per second bandwidth and 4MB 100MHz SGRAM memory. And, with its explosive new 3D engine, it won't ever compromise screaming fast frame rates for phenomenal animation and visual quality. As a result, the Viper delivers stunning realism for your 3D business and entertainment applications. If our unofficial testers could talk, they'd tell you that no other accelerator brings together such an impressive combination of 2D speed and 3D graphics. For more information about these and all of our other Diamond products, please contact the authorised Australian distributor for your nearest dealer, toll free on 1800 248 692.

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PEACE, LOVE AND COMPUTER GAMES

A week with Microsoft

BEN MANSILL VISITS GAMESTOCK '98

At the beginning of February this year I was invited to visit Microsoft's HQ in Redmond, Seattle to see their new games and game technology. After pondering hard, I replied .000004 seconds later that I'd love to go.

The purpose for the trip was to attend what Microsoft calls "Gamestock" to celebrate "Peace, love and games". Stop laughing! This is serious! Together with almost 100 game

journos from around the world, I was shown the game products that Microsoft will release over the coming year. My overwhelming impression is that Microsoft are dead serious about games - absolutely everything I saw was of the highest quality and any doubts I had of their ability to produce games of the highest calibre were utterly dispelled.

The following pages are the fruits of my journey.

Bigger, better, faster and prettier than ever. For Microsoft to rule the world they'll have to make most gamers very happy. Cast aside ethical doubts and reap the benefits friends, for never has a finer fiddle been available to the Nero of a burning city.

The persistent undercurrent which drives Microsoft's development is standardisation. Thus it has always been. It permeates absolutely every aspect of product design and marketing, as well as clearly being the culture of the people, and architecturally, the place they work.

The street address for the HQ in Seattle is One Microsoft Way. Note that it's a "One", not a "1". One Microsoft Way. One way for everybody, the Microsoft Way. Whether you're a games developer, a hardware or silicon manufacturer, or an end user (that's

Quake/2 engine games will be OpenGL, thanks to idsoftware's John Carmack waving that flag in an increasingly desperate last hurrah. The innovative A3D 2-speaker surround sound solution, as pioneered by Diamond's Monster Sound, has been abandoned

by the vastly superior Voodoo, it did not offer developers any reason to use it. Quake was, and still is, Microsoft's biggest problem. John Carmack, being a true idealistic purist, chose OpenGL as the rendering engine. Direct3D

the intervening year or so all the gamers heard about was the ongoing public debate between John Carmack (who relished every moment) and a succession of Microsoft spokespeople. Carmack's power was that he argued for Quake, OpenGL and

"ANNUAL CYCLE, REPEAT AS REQUIRED"

DIRECT 3D

The engine-house driving the games of the future

done by developers in favour of Direct 6's DirectSound3D, while I Force, the pioneering force feedback system from Immersion Corporation, which CH Products abortively went with, is as good as dead - and 3Dfx's Glide isn't far behind.

Of course, it won't all go

offered an inferior, but still feasible level of performance, but developers quickly complained of it being difficult to understand and work with - the Sony Playstation sank the Sega Saturn because it was a pig to program on, when compared to the Sony's friendly and familiar C.

the common good. Irresistible stuff for game fans and it wasn't long before everyone knew what OpenGL was, and that it was better than Direct3D because it made Quake run. With admirable and probably carefully calculated style, Microsoft battered down, issuing only spo-

MICROSOFT'S BILLION-DOLLAR TECHNOLOGY FOR GAMES.

"Gamer", end users). Microsoft strive for nothing less than absolute domination in every area within their grasp. Anything less is not an option. \$2.1 billion dollars was spent on research and development last year - they are very serious.

Just about the only thing Microsoft don't make is silicon, but we'll count that as a clever win because they control it. Not absolutely, but within a year of DirectX 6's release there won't be a new 3D chip designed without compliance with DirectX specifications. The Industry Process plan for Direct3D sheds a little light on the quest for standardisation:

- Accumulate software development requirements
- Negotiate/evangelize features to hardware manufacturers
- Hardware manufacturers fabricate silicon
- Expose features through Direct3D API/DDI
- Evangelise back to software developers
- Software developers write titles
- End users win

Will Microsoft rule the world?

We win. Sort of. For the end user it will mean everything is DirectX. Mostly everything,

according to the Microsoft Way - each year will hopefully see 2-3 breakthrough independent innovations. These occasional bright sparks will add to the increasingly warm glow emanating from the Microsoft camp as they are absorbed, merged or acquired.

But is it Good or Evil?

Microsoft are both consolidating their immense base like no other company has ever been able to, while throwing the maximum possible effort behind the push to the future. They walked into the joystick market and took over with their first stick, as well as their first control pad and their first Force Feedback stick. Expect them to do the same with the remaining game-peripheral categories before the year is out.

As to whether the ethics of Microsoft's totalitarianism deserves a blind eye in favour of we, the end user getting a generally better overall experience with our games... May I suggest the Letters Page.

As they did with the internet, Microsoft underestimated 3D hardware acceleration's rapid growth. While Direct3D accompanied the unveiling of the first consumer cards - the Rendition V1000, fol-



SPITFIRE

Microsoft quickly released two showcase Direct3D games; Monster Truck Madness and Fury 3. While competitive with OpenGL games and those written natively for the Rendition and Voodoo, they remained the only Direct3D games for much of the first year. It required the in-house expertise of Microsoft to handle Direct3D effectively, just as the only good Saturn games came from Sega.

The turning point

Microsoft then did what they do, they got serious. They hired as many of the best talent they could find - expanding their staff numbers many times over, with the immediate focus being to get the developers onside. What went on behind the scenes was clearly effective in the long run, but for

radic press releases on the subject and working flat out on what was really important.

At face value, all Microsoft have to work with are the soft-



MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2



MOTOCROSS MADNESS

ware drivers and operating system. Their success here is now dependant upon the support of the chip designers. The backing of the game developers was the initial priority, now though, with the most new 3D games looking good for Direct3D support, Microsoft can seal it all off by convincing the chip makers to conform to their design requirements. This control won't cap innovation, but it will limit it.

Standardise or sink

Other than OpenGL, only Glide, 3Dfx's native language for the Voodoo/2, offers any 3D alternative to Direct3D (or poses any threat to it, depending on how

you look at it). At Gamestock, Charles Boyd, the program Manager for DirectDraw and Direct3D said "3Dfx are really happy, they're saying it's like it was written especially for them". 3Dfx has always offered the fastest Direct3D platform anyway, and will continue to be among the top OpenGL cards through Voodoo 2 and probably beyond. It will though, be used by game developers primarily in Direct3D mode. Almost every new video card offers Direct3D support - they have to, or go the way of the Saturn. To stay on top, 3Dfx must ensure they're as Direct3D-friendly as possible. So, virtually every new 3D, non-Carmack game will be Direct3D, which means that it had better be good...

A little bit faster now...

Direct3D 6.0 is more than your regulation version jump. It is by far the most important subset of DirectX 6.0, and is where most of Microsoft's effort went over the last year. As with the Voodoo 2 over its' predecessor, Direct3D 6.0 will boost raw speed by up to 2-3 times. This is simply great news for gamers. New instruction sets and support for several current CPUs, plus a cleaner pathway between the hardware and the game kick it along nicely. Quake 2 was demonstrated running under Direct3D 6 and it looked better, if marginally slower, than Voodoo with OpenGL. Interestingly, this was being run on the new Intel i740 3D chip - two firsts at once for me. The lighting was brilliant and the detail much less foggy, the speed problems I'll lay on the Intel chip for now, giving MS the benefit of the doubt.

• 4000 POLYGONS PER CHARACTER, REAL TIME PHOTOREALISTIC IMAGES.

That's a 3D game in 16 million colours running fast and looking better than current cut scenes.

• NEW RASTERIZER

Optimised for MMX with true transparency and multitexture effects, anisotropic texture filtering and antialiasing. Multitexture effects offer many pleasing new opportunities to developers, in one pass several different textures and texture types can be applied to a surface. The following effects can now be applied alone, or in combination, while new effects can be programmed at any point in the future:

Light maps
Reflections in any surface
Texture morphing
Detail textures
Gloss mapping
Volumetric fog maps

The sexiest new feature of the rasterizer is Bump Mapping. This 3D effect was previously only available in non-realtime renderers. It does what it sounds like; textures and effects are applied to truly curved surfaces. Previously, a curve (like a sphere, or ripples on water) comprised as many polygons as you were prepared to accept in the speed/image quality tradeoff.

• NEW GEOMETRY PIPELINE AND DRIVER INTERFACE

Programmers should appreciate easier, clearer, faster access to the hardware. The new vertex formats are more flexible, letting developers match more game

- Texture compression
Up to 4x compression can be achieved for texture maps in memory, effectively quadrupling the size or detail of the texture.
- Stencil Planes
Shadows and other 2D duplicated shapes will be drawn faster.
- Luminance Surfaces
Reduces the CPU burden true positional lighting imposes by providing a texture mapped luminance in a fixed area, achieving the same result for a lower CPU hit.

melody and Microsoft does the rest. After composing the melody, the musical style is selected. Microsoft will supply developers with a library of over 100 "styles". Various styles and tempos are then keyed to game events - as many as the programmers choose, and then the end result is effectively left in the hands of the gamer. As a game is played, DirectMusic creates music based on the foundation melody. It's truly a real-time AI music creator. It's quite possible to play a game

DIRECT

"I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that, I'm busy composing music for a game"

many times over and never hear the same

It's called DirectMusic and it's both the scariest and most exciting thing I saw at Redmond.

Many games boast music scores which switch tempo on the fly to match the on-screen action. Recent Wing Commander games managed this particularly well. However, getting this effect to work well is a programming chore and the end results are often simply not noticed by gamers because change ends up being subtle, or alternatively, you end up with sudden changes which just don't compliment the gameplay.

music twice.

This is the scary bit. The library of 100+ "styles" Microsoft have come up with are not simply samples, or acoustic effects such as you'd find on a Hammond organ or quality stereo amplifier, but are actually algorithms. The melody is fed into the chosen algorithm and DirectMusic produces random musical creations. This randomness can be set by the composer, but what you'll be hearing is a hybrid of human musical talent and computer Artificial Intelligence. If the game programmers allow it, gamers will be able to mess around with the settings, choosing a "style" that suits their tastes. This makes for wildly varying music which may bear little or no resemblance to the intentions of the original composer. I was shown a

very primitive Asteroids game to demonstrate the

technology. It was set to specifically demonstrate the power of DirectMusic, so all the changes and effects were enhanced beyond the point of bearability. Everytime an asteroid was shot the music would switch, move the ship around and the tempo sped up proportional to the ships speed. Each new level featured completely new music - or so I thought, in fact it was the same base-melody all along, but being pumped through a different style algorithm.

THE MEAT

Standardised gaming super-power for the masses

Offering much more on paper than DirectX/3D 6, the new API set opens up opportunities for game and hardware developers. This time around, Microsoft will go all-out supporting and evangelising the new way, with completely new and greatly expanded teams responsible for documentation, samples and support. If the developers embrace its potential and the Way, here's what Direct3D and DirectDraw number 6 can do for you:

data throughput, enabling more features and/or speed. Optimisation for specific CPU types (including forthcoming chips) gives everything a free boost. Other improvements include improved vertex buffers and texture caching for faster geometry operations, plus range based fog, something which previously had to be mimicked by software.

Other new DirectX 6.0 features that bode well for gamers include:

DirectMusic is an entirely different solution. It can change the music in almost infinite ways, and can be keyed to a similarly almost endless set of gameplay parameters.

True computer music

For the composer, it means an end to the traditional method of writing a complete musical score, then composing and recording variations for different gameplay sections. Now, the composer will need to only produce a basic

The new sound of music

Obviously DirectMusic is an extremely powerful way of enhancing the game experience. The ethical problem is that it greatly diminishes the role of the original composer, and the tasks they are left with bear little in common with current compositional practise. The end result though, is just too good a thing for gamers for them to be concerned with the redefinition of the composers job-description. For many gamers who normally

GAMES!GAMES!GAMES!

Microsoft never make the same mistake twice. Their second-generation batch of games are uniformly excellent

will then spend the rest of the year building games which use the new features, and we'll all get a ton of games dumped on us each Christmas and not much else in between. This discourages the longer development times needed for deeper, more

Microsoft's first batch of games, released over a year ago, were, to be as kind as possible, lame. They attacked each main genre and in every case failed. Only Monster Truck Madness stood the test of time.

Then came Age of Empires. It

ers of gameplay, mostly along resource management and research lines.

Age 2 is set in medieval times. Knights and castles and stuff. The same graphic quality is present, as with the first, this is one drop-dead gorgeous game. Lower a spiked castle gate just when a horse is under it is something you just have to see!

The technology tree now has more than 100 "modes" - more than the average player would cover during a game, say Microsoft. Economic warfare is now a viable option, and even the most single-minded warriors will now have to dedicate at least some care to ensuring their economy is healthy. In terms of diplomacy, economic alliances can be forged and maintained - even with races you are at war with on a military front.

All this is good and well, but the single greatest improvement, one which all Age 1 gamers begged for, is production queuing. Bruce Shelley held out on queues with Age 1, as he felt it would make it too much an arcade-style game. Possibly true,

but with the considerably added depth of Age 2 that factor is greatly diminished.

None of this advanced gameplay was present in the beta

TMUSIC



turn game music off, it could well open up a rich and exciting new way to play.

The Christmas avalanche

Microsoft plan to bring us a new DirectX every Christmas. This is in keeping with their 12 month development plans for most things. This is an aspect which has bothered some developers, such as Brian Hook at idsoftware. Microsoft will bring out a new DirectX each year, a little after Christmas. Developers

Descent to Undermountain and Lands of Lore 2 show how a prolonged development can sink a game because it looks dated graphically when it finally gets released. While it's difficult to complain about the prospect of a paradigm leap each and every year, the added competitiveness between developers, fuelled by a 12 month mindfix from the marketing team, makes for some nice looking, but shallow games. Lots of them, most released at the same time, Christmas.

deservedly became their biggest selling game, thanks mainly to the design talent of Bruce Shelley - famed for his work on Civilization. Extraordinarily beautiful graphics helped too, as did the approachability of the game.

Microsoft have been very careful not to repeat their mistake. Several titles have been scrapped when virtually complete. They only want top titles out there and by the look of the second batch, this is the way it'll be.

Age of Empires 2

The one and only failing of the first Age was it's lack of depth. Those that accuse it of being Warcraft with different graphics aren't far wrong. So, designer Bruce Shelley has focussed his efforts on adding many new lay-

which Bruce demonstrated, but as with all things Microsoft, Age 2 will be a Christmas release and is as safe a bet as any to be one hell of a top game.

Motocross Madness

Every few months a new videotape appears from a bunch of completely insane Americans known as the Crusty Demons of Dirt. They are priceless - find them! The Demons are hardcore Pepsi Max types who try their hardest to kill themselves on motocross bikes. We're not talking pre-conceived double-decker bus jumping, but spotting a small

mountain while riding through the desert, the jumping off it on the bike, staying airborne for what seems like an eternity.

Motocross Madness is the Crusty Demons game. Microsoft bought the rights and the game kicks in with several most excellent minutes of video footage (sans the traditional party scenes most Crusty tapes include... Microsoft is a family company).

This is a motocross sim. There's nothing arcade about the brilliantly real physics and bike dynamics. When playing, the position of the joystick corresponds to the riders body. In a

either a 3rd or 1st person perspective, Outwars puts you in the combat suit of a futuristic jet-pack equipped soldier doing it against the evil invading alien hordes.

The 3D terrain is very average graphically, but the gameplay absolutely sparkles. Each mission essentially involves traversing a linear bit of terrain, blasting everything in your way. It's huge fun - and sometimes unbelievably difficult, a factor compounded by the deliberate lack of a savegame feature.

Adding to the fun/difficulty is the allotment of barely enough ammo and health to get the job done. You'll finish most levels with 1 bullet left and on 1% health. That's after the 27th attempt, too. It's so much fun that it doesn't bug you like a Wing Commander game would. The mission requirements keep it all

in whatever way suits your fancy. Construct new units and send them into battle, observing from above, or free floating within the virtual world. Or go 1st-person, pick a unit and take control! Fly and drive while the war around you rages. There are 15 very cool vehicles to build and or control.

A transparent overhead map allows quick strategic decision and control, wherever you are in the game.

Playing Urban Assault is immensely enjoyable. We've been following the betas for this game for over a year and it just gets better and better.

Monster Truck Madness 2

Everything looks positive for a Monster Truck Madness 13 in the year 2010. This simple but strangely enjoyable bit of offroading fluff did amazingly well for Microsoft, and the sequel shows the commitment they have to keep the ball rolling.

More, basically. More tracks, more trucks, more courses and they all look much better and include more detail.

INTER

off" demo, as there is still much work to be done, but what I was shown looks impressive. The graphics were stunning, as was the modelling of the aircraft. Flight Sim being a totally open engine, there should be ample 3rd party addons as with the straight Flight Sim. Indeed, users can import aircraft to and from the Spitfire game, flying a 737 against a Mustang, for example, or dropping any of the WWII combat planes into the normal Flight Sim game!

My only concern is the flight model. All 3rd party attempts to model highly manoeuvrable combat aircraft with the Flight Sim engine have failed badly. The flight model likes gradual, delicate joystick inputs and doesn't much like being thrown around the sky. We will see at Christmas...

Microsoft Golf 1998 Edition

Another good looking and probably excellent golf game.

Microsoft Baseball 3D

As above, but replace "Golf" with "baseball".

Microsoft Revenge of Arcade

The follow up to Microsoft Arcade, this one includes the original versions of: Ms. Pac Man, Xevious, Rally-X, Mappy and Motos.

The Internet Gaming Zone rules the internet. With more than 1.1 million registered users and up to 6,500 logged on simultaneously during peak times, there is simply nothing close.

Outstanding design and relatively easy access has made it so. Essentially, the Zone is a meeting place. Once you've found your game and the gamers you want to duel, the Zone drops out and leaves you and your opponents running nothing but the game software. That means the best possible speed. This structure won't last forever though, as pay for use will be introduced for premium titles and those which Microsoft have developed especially for online play. Unfortunately for Australian users, these games need a local server for peak performance, and an Australian server isn't



SPITFIRE

There are ten new tracks, and Microsoft, in a decision that's difficult to rationalise, but easy to accept, have also included the original tracks from Monster 1. The graphics are hugely improved. The original terrain was pretty spartan, but the second generation has many more trackside objects and the texturing is much richer.

Spitfire

Now here's a products about 10 years overdue. It's Microsoft Flight Simulator with guns. Yep, the grandpappy of all Microsoft games, and the much beloved by all commercial flight sim enthusiasts now lets you do what the rest of us take for granted.

Eight WWII combat aircraft have been modelled and thrown into the existing Flight Sim engine. These are the: Spitfire Mk I and the Mk IX, the Hurricane Mk I, Bf 109E and 109G, the Focke Wulf 190A8, P-47D and P-51D Mustang. Spitfire was strictly a "hand-

jump, pull it back slightly so as to land tail first. The 3D terrain is rock solid and undulates beautifully, making for plenty of freestyle trickery. This is what the game is all about, sure there are set races and stunt courses, but the real joy comes from fanging it hard with reckless abandon.

Motocross Madness is ready and finished now, but in line with Microsoft's Christmas-only agenda, will sit in a dark room until late November...

Outwars

This 3D action game is extremely impressive. Played in

interesting and the weapons are highly cool.

Urban Assault

The exciting new genre that's been threatening to appear for over a year is the 1st-person real-time strategy game. After many promises from many companies, we're yet to get there, but with Urban Assault Microsoft look set to take the kudos.

The post-apocalyptic landscape is convincingly real. Charred half-buildings and a deep ochre sky make you feel like you need a radiation suit. Within this environment, you take on the enemy

INTERNET GAMING

Forge legends the world will speak of in revered tones



planned at this stage.

Microsoft are fully aware of the need to get a local server up and running, but things are moving slowly and it could be the end of the year before we see the situation rectified. This, frankly, sucks. After the US, Australia is the largest online gaming community in the world. Ahead of the UK and Europe - who have servers, and way ahead of New Zealand, who, I was told by Microsoft at Redmond, will be getting a server before us. This is our new cause, readers. We're going to cry and whinge and stamp our feet until we get an Australian Zone server. You can too. Write to Melinda Dunn at Microsoft, 65 Epping Rd North Ryde NSW 2113 and politely ask for this ridiculous situation to be rectified post-haste.

You may think of the Zone as a collection of stodgy old card games, with titles like Total Annihilation and X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter to make it sexy - but offering no reason to use it with a multitude of other sites catering for the very same games. You'd be largely correct, but for three new games which make it all hugely more appealing.

Fighter Ace

This WWII internet-only dog-fighting arena is simply huge fun. At Redmond I played online against the lucky Americans who have had the service available for several months now. I couldn't get off it! Surrounded by the newest and bestest games and hardware, I spent most of the time I was supposed to be checking out other stuff shooting and being shot down. Majorly addictive.

Being a WWII sim, you get the benefits of no real instrumentation or avionics learning curve. You also get powerful aircraft that don't need to be nursed along, as with WWI sims. What you do get are 16

accurately modelled WWII combat aircraft - none with overwhelming advantages and all a delight to fly.

Getting into the game is an effortless breeze. Just hit the button and you're on the runway of your team's colour. Release the brakes and go get them. When airborne a colour coded info bar above each plane shows who's flying and their team. The combat area is quite small, and within a minute of getting up you're in the action. Die and you materialize back on the runway, brakes away and up again for more. Strafing planes sitting on the runway is a perfectly honourable thing to do, surprisingly, but the major disincentive to do so is the heavy anti-air ground fire surrounding a base. The only way to pull it off is to stay under 100 feet and only make one, perfect pass.

For anyone wanting more than Quake or real-time strategy on the net, Fighter Ace is perfect. Even those who have steadfastly refused to play a flight sim will be hooked. I am, and fully intend to wield my mighty power to get Fighter Ace to Australia!

Asheron's Call

This is not strictly Microsoft's answer to Ultima Online, for stylistically it is quite different, but for all intents it is indeed UO dressed in a different kilt.

Unlike UO, Asheron's looks far more like the traditional single-player RPG. Stats and info take up most of the screen, with a windowed 3rd-person view of the game world. Character classes have been abolished, giving the player much greater freedom in crafting the character of their dreams. Asheron's will add new adventures, items and environments over time.

Of course, being able to make a judgement call on a complex online RPG is only possible by actually playing it for an extended period. Unfortunately, as with Fighter Ace, we'll need a local server. You CAN play on the US server, for lag is much less of a problem in an RPG than a flight sim, but as any Australian who's played UO knows, it still sucks big time.

UltraCorps

Woo hoo! Finally we get Master of Orion 2 online. Sort of.

UltraCorp is a sci-fi strategy game of resource management, technology research, combat and diplomacy. Like MOO2.

Graphically, UltraCorps is a bit of a spreadsheet, but that's the style of the game responsible for that. The screen layout and interface is excellent, and the player can use the game on the simplest level, digging deeper to the advanced features as their expertise grows. The game universe is huge - but only to accommodate the thousands of simultaneous players Microsoft expect. As the game ebbs and flows, the economics are affected and players far from heated battle will still feel the effects by way of free flowing commodity prices.

Lastly, UltraCorps deserves a major round of applause for being turn-based instead of real-time. Resisting the urge to go real-time shows that the game's designers respect real strategy gaming. As Pax Imperia and Rebellion demonstrate, this kind of game can be rendered unplayable in real-time mode. Turn-based is the only way to go. The complex micromanagement required for success can only be handled by normal humans in a turn-based environment. Nice one, Microsoft.

UltraCorps should be perfectly playable on overseas servers, although Microsoft were unable to confirm this as the game is still in development. It should be released in the second half of 1998.

OBSERVATIONS

Visiting Microsoft's HQ in Redmond, Seattle was an intriguing experience. Besides soaking up the new games and game technology, I was left with many varying impressions of the Big M and the city they inhabit...

Microsoft make great games. If you choose only to look at the end result you will be content. The quality will overcome the moral doubts held by most who are bothered that what they're doing is totalitarian.

I couldn't help thinking of Heaven's Gate.

Every door needs a photo-id key pass.

It's not called building, or a complex, but a campus.

MS employees have an answer for absolutely everything, have a self confidence rating of 350% and those without short haircuts act like they have one.

Microsoft desperately want to be cool.

I only saw 1 policeman in a week of heavy trekking in Seattle. In LA every second

person/vehicle is military. There is a huge, pink stripclub in the middle of Seattle with a monster sign that reads: "100's of Beautiful Girls and 3 Ugly Ones."

In the sound labs, where each of the dozen studios is named after a dead musician, there was no "Sid Vicious" room.

They watch children playing games through 2-way mirrors.

"Don't walk on the grass." signs are unnecessary, you just feel wrong doing it.

Every single desk, from the lowliest pleb's to the most esoteric supertechgod, sports the most cutting edge equipment for the job.

No building is higher than 3 storeys, said structures spread out for as far as the eye can see, with new construction visible all around the distant, hazy perimeter.

Microsoft employees get parking tickets with "Microsoft Security" headers.

The people at Microsoft are the nicest I've ever met.



Hexen Maker

Category	Map Maker
Price	STBA
Publisher	Virtus Software
Available	Now

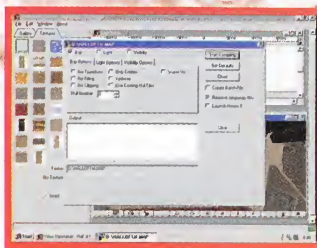
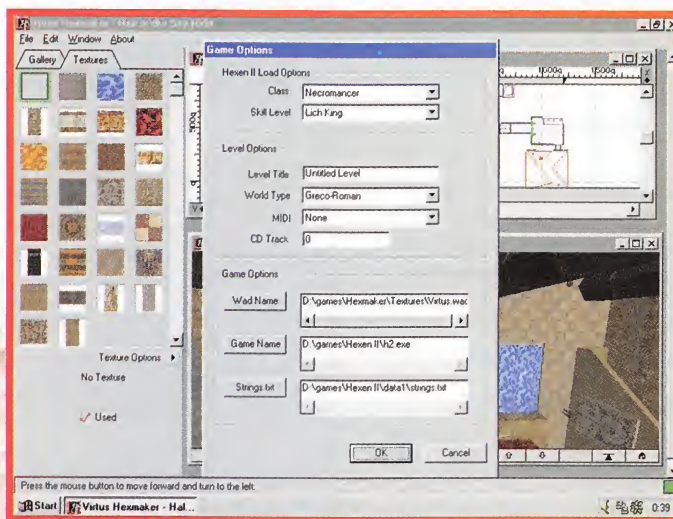
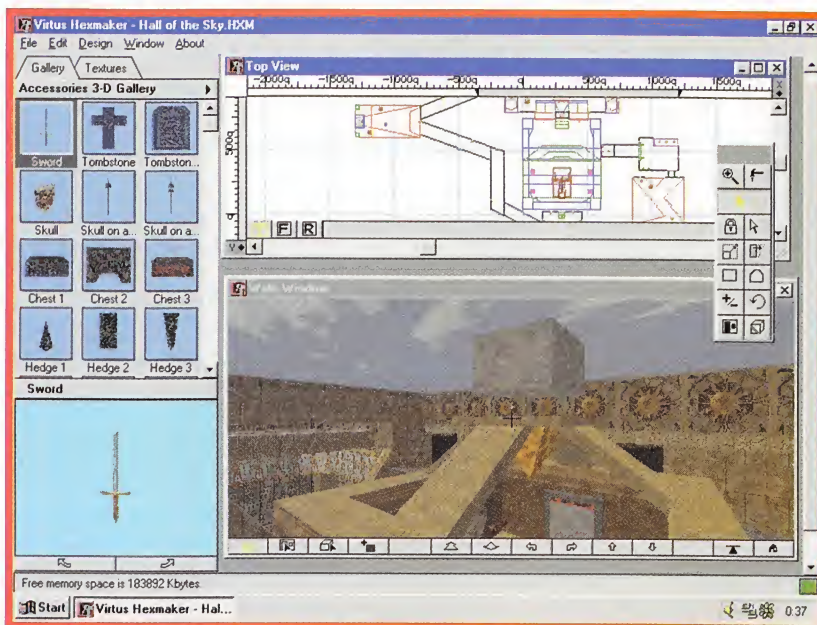
From the same team that brought Deathmatch Maker to the world (a Quake level editor, naturally) comes Hexmaker, the only Hexen 2 level editor authorised by id software. If you're new to the world of level creation, consider yourself very lucky indeed. Back in the old 2D days, constructing levels for Doom was a nightmare of linedefs, sidedefs and other horrid things that took a CompSci degree to understand. These days, there are heaps of tools out there to help you make Quake/Hexen levels that are user-friendly and much more visual than their Doom cousins. If you've ever used any architectural/engineering drawing software, you'll find this stuff a piece of cake.

Most editors have now standardised the feel of these programs to include a drawing window/s where you create your objects such as rooms and place objects like enemies in them; a tools window where you select textures, objects, lighting etc; and a 3D window where you can see your creation in real-time.

Hexmaker features only one drawing view at a time thought (top-down, front view, side view), which can make it difficult to plot out what you're drawing. The tools window is excellently laid out though, categorizing all the objects in the game by type, eg, indoor objects, outdoor objects, active objects, artifacts, badguys etc. making it really easy to find the object you're looking for. The only drawback here is that you can only import 300 textures to work with at a time, and since they are categorised only alphabetically it can be hard to find the exact texture you're looking for. The 3D walkthrough view has to be the slickest I've seen in any editor. Whilst it doesn't give you the freedom of all camera angles and rotation like some others, it shows all

objects you place in the level (except for lights) giving you a true idea of what the finished product will look like. It's also fast, and doesn't slow down too much on large, complex levels.

The other funky feature is the built in 'prefabs' - things like rooms and bridges and stairwells that other people have designed that you don't get in any of the



shareware editors. The included prefabs will tide you over for most of your level needs, and there are even 10 built-in levels that you can hack and slash as you desire.

There are a few things I didn't like though. First is the fact that you can't build levels and then link them as hubs, meaning that your levels will be linear in single player mode, and Hexen 2 deathmatch won't really take off until Hexen2World (only if it makes it out before Unreal). The documentation is also scant although this

is made up for by extensive online help and tutorials. It also feels roughly coded and has a slight Win 3.x feel to it that is a little disconcerting (it even crashed a couple of times on machine in that good old fashioned Win 3.x way). But by far the biggest problem I had is bang for buck. Would you fork out the hard-earned plastic stuff for something that is available for free on the net, 'with few restrictions'? I would have answered yes to this question if Hexmaker bundled other tools like a skin editor, model maker, mod-author, weapons patch maker etc. into one easy to use application, but it doesn't. As it stands, it's cheaper to get all these applications separately from the net and bundle them in a directory to make your own Quake/Hexen Office suite.

George Argy



www.hexmaker.com/

Are the present 'hub' maps in Hexen 2 too much for you? Make your own!

For Easy to use. The walkthrough view is one of the best I've seen. Heaps of built-in prefabs.

Against You've got to ask why you'd pay good money for something that is so freely available on the net, and sometimes better. Only lets you create levels, nothing else.

Need P100, 16MB RAM, 40MB HDD free, CD-ROM, registered version of Hexen II installed

Want P166, 32MB RAM, a nice 2D video card, 17" monitor - at least

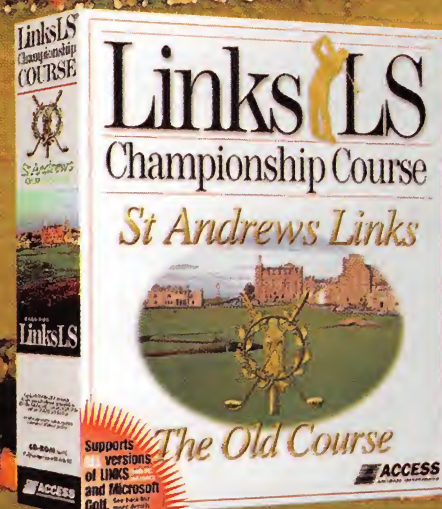
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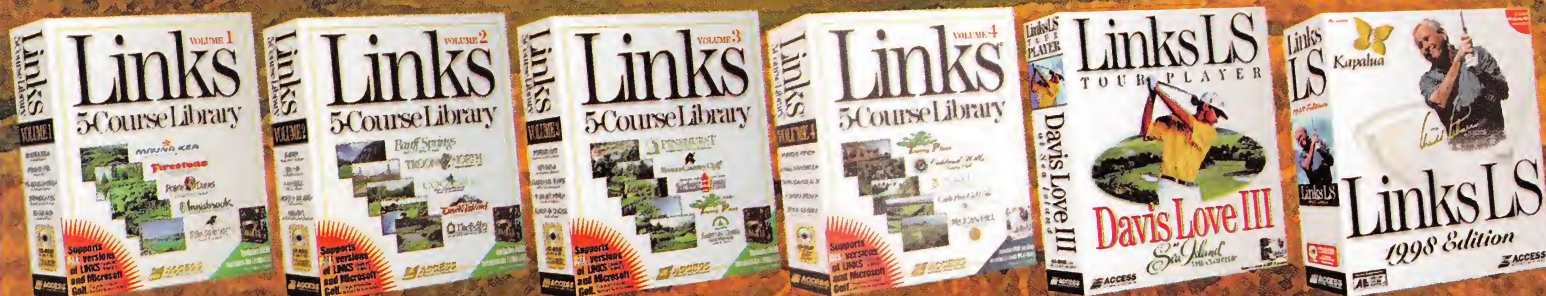
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STATE of PLAY

The low down on the latest in the genre that's the greatest - depending on your taste. Like a fine Cottee's cordial, The State of Play gives you the concentrated essence of gaming goodness you need to survive in this time of gaming revolution.

Adventure/RPG

David Wildgoose

Two more than noteworthy things were passed my way this month. Both were compilation packs featuring some gaming relics from the deep, dark past. One, the Ultima Collection, you can read about in Diversions a little later this issue, while the other, Interplay's Ultimate RPG Archives, arrived fractionally too late and will be similarly examined next month.

As a connoisseur of classic ancient titles, I was particularly pleased to see the likes of Ultimas IV and V, Wasteland (the very primitive inspiration for Fallout) and World Of Xeen again. More than that, though, it's been a great thrill to finally be able to have a play with Ultima VI, Crusaders Of The Dark Savant and Bard's Tale III, all names I heard



so much praise for yet had never experienced for myself.

I'm sure many of you feel the same way. The past is full of wonderful games, but how many are still available? Compared to music, books, videos, etc, games seem to have an extremely short shelf-life. Waiting (usually in vain) for publishers to re-release compilations is just about our only hope to play those old titles we missed the first time round. Thankfully, we're seeing more and more coming out. Sierra have put out the Quest For Glory Anthology and just repackaged their other numerous Quest series, Legend and Infocom have produced large bundles of their old games, and LucasArts have now reached Archives Vol 3.

Another cool trend a number of companies have adopted recently is the release of back catalogue items as freeware. Generally, this has been done as a promotion for a forthcoming title. Sierra let us sample Betrayal At Krondor for free while we were waiting for Antara. Gateway was given the same treatment by Legend to encourage us to buy their Lost Adventures compilation. Even Origin's free distribution of Ultima IV last year was probably intended to advertise Ultima Online.

Some will be cynical about this, as if it's no more than a cheap way to garner publicity. They're right, of course. It is cheap, it does attract publicity - but it also means we get some classic games for free! And for that, long may it continue. Personally, I can't wait for Infogrames' Bonkers French Games Part One.

Action

George Argy

It would appear that most long-awaited titles are nearing completion. Well, that's a blatant lie to keep you reading further, but the truth is that Unreal finally has a release date! Yes, you heard right - no more ubiquitous 'real soon now', but a pre-millennium date. That date is, umm, mid-April. You may even be holding the box in your hot little hands as you read this, but I doubt it coz you'd probably be surgically attached to your PC by now. That may even be bigger news than id's announcement this month that they will be releasing Quake III instead of the Quake II mission pack! My instant reaction was 'Tops! Another hot game in case of the remote possibility that I get bored of Quake II!' but



when my heart rate had dropped below 400 bpm, this had me concerned for a couple of reasons. Firstly, ever heard of the concept 'too much of a good thing'? This many different Quake releases are going to drive the community nuts. The gamex86.dll file that runs Quake II is no longer backwards compatible, so mod authors have to recompile with every new release, file sites have to keep up to date, game servers have to update and reconfigure - it's a major pain in the ass and makes id look less professional. Add a whole new game like Quake III to the mix and you've got some major headaches underway. I suspect one of two motives: 1) id want to release Quake III to finish the relationship with Activision so they have more artistic freedom over Trinity, and 2) id/Activision are genuinely worried about the next generation of shooters coming out. After all, if everything they say about Unreal is true, Quake II (much as it pains me to say this) won't stand a chance! So there's some stimulating conversation for your next LAN party.

In lesser news, Hexen2world is still being beta tested and honestly doesn't sound like it will be released by the time you read this. However, Raven's Hexen II mission pack Portal of Praevus should be.

Strategy

Peter Sharpe

Breaking news! My beloved pet, Freddy the Wonder Ferret is now a high ranking C&C Sole Survivor player. Just goes to show that if a ferret with a sexual attraction to a keyboard and mouse can succeed strategically in a game...please Westwood, make C&C2 worthwhile, at least out of the intellectual reach of deviant household pets. Total Annihilation addicts start panting heavily and raise thy heart rates. The great galactic apocalyptic war between Arm and Core is about to end in a victory for the forces of Arm. Out of the ashes of Core's near destruction rises the TA expansion pack, The Core Contingency. Boasting extra maps, a mission editor and the big wet dream feature of 75 new units! Prepare for a brave new world of underwater constructions, hover-



craft units, snipers and the massive Core "big lumbering thing of death" Krogoth. Since news broke, TA fans on the Net have jammed Caps Lock keys from constantly repeating phrases like "OH MY GOD 75 NEW UNITS!" and "I WANT IT NOW!". All of the additional units will be available for multiplayer, expect riots in games stores very early May when the expansion hits Aussie land.

Civ fans have craved it, the dawn of a new age of "Get a life gaming" is nearly upon us. Multiplayer capability will finally materialise in the rather blandly named "Ultimate Civilisation II". Included in the package will be those wacky alternative scenarios but most importantly LAN, Internet, modem and E-mail play for those who fear the numb-bum syndrome associated with long stretches of Civ2. Civ's Godfather is Sid Meier, and he's a busy lad at the moment. His last effort Gettysburg was an excellent game of tactics, but Sid's next offering is Alpha Centauri and feel free to get excited over the prospect of a space empire game with Sid Meier's name on it. Developed on a design by Sid's good mate Brian Reynold's, could we see the dethroning of MOO2 in the making? Don't be surprised. The next instalment of the X-Com saga gets this month's "This could suck horribly, but if they do it right...awesome" award. 3D space combat mixed with more X-Commy resource management might upset the purists of the series, but hopefully the ability to control the course of the war will make X-COM: Interceptor more than a Wing Commander clone minus Mark Hamill.

Sims

Maj. Ian Lindgren

Secrets! Spies tell me that Jane's are planning an Israeli Air Force simulation that might be titled IAF. The game is planned to include the capability to fly aircraft from the entire historical Israeli air inventory, from 1948 to the F-16, F-15, the Kfir. I'll keep you posted.

On the helo front, Mindscape have taken on the development of Team Apache and plan to release mid year. The game will model two of the most lethal attack helicopters in the world, the AH-64D Apache Longbow and the Russian Mi-28N Havoc-B, and run them up against one another. Extensive effort is going into the visual aspects of the game, both in representing terrain and the in-cockpit views, and the terrain engine is also being specifical-



ly designed for low level helicopter combat.

NovaLogic are planning to release a Win95 native version of Comanche 3, named Comanche 3 Gold. This should be out mid year and will add a mission design tool, 40 new missions, four new campaigns, new vehicles and weapons, such as the LCAC, the T-90 Tank, and the SA391 Gazelle Chinese Helicopter.

Keep your eye out for developments on SU-27 Flanker 2.0. This new version is due out mid to late 98 and offers modern graphics without compromising the technical excellence of its famous predecessor! If you want to keep up with the Su27 1.5 action, check out the 82 VFS Sydney Hawks at http://www.triode.net.au/~bm/S_Hawks.htm. They meet on the last Saturday of every month, and conduct co-operative campaigns over a LAN. Anyone interested can contact Allen Pawley at abg@ram.net.au. While I'm on online flight sims, Warbirds II fans should check out the ANZAC RAAF Squadron page at <http://www.ozemail.com.au/~sglasson/wbraaf/>. They're keen for new members.

On the upgrade front, F22 fans should check out Air Combat Designer, a Dynamic Mission Designer for F-22 at www.gttweb.com; it's freeware! The Steel Panthers III Campaign Disk will be released by end of May 98. This expands the battlefield with three new campaigns, 35 new scenarios, and a multiplayer version for Windows 95 that allows up to 4 players to battle via LAN or the Internet.

Online

Gareth Jones

Ultima Online is easily the most ambitious online game ever, though as cool as it sounds the reality is often less than appealing. Still no news on an Asian based server for the game, but a group of dissatisfied UO players have filed a law suit against Origin for various reasons, including misleading labelling on the box (it doesn't make clear the time charges, and promises 24/7 play though the servers continually go down), and it marks a growing dissatisfaction with a game that was always going to be a high risk affair. Is it time for Origin to scale down UO in an effort to make it playable rather than just ambitious?

Meridian 59, 3Do's online RPG is about to be revamped and relaunched - and I have to



say that low-tech online games (compared to UO) like this are becoming ever more attractive. Retitled 'Meridian 59: Renaissance', it won't have the scope or grandeur of UO, but some of the areas have been improved graphically, there will be new spells, new potions, 2 new characters (the Necromancer and the Hunters), new weapons, and new monsters. So if you would prefer to play large scale online games the way they can be, rather than the way we'd like them to be, it might be worth checking out www.3do.com/meridian.

Woohoo! Don't you just love it when multiplayer capabilities are added in to games in the form of a patch, and isn't it even better when you're expected to pay for something that should have been included in the first place? Microprose's Magic: The Gathering now has a multiplayer patch, called 'Manalink' available for free...but it's a huge 67MB download. And then there's one of the best games of all time, Civ2, which will finally be multiplayable, but guess what - you're going to have to pay for it. It's expected soonish, but check out www.microprose.com/gamesdesign/ultciv2/index.html for more details. Though if you don't want to wait, or pay, some industrious programmers have made their own multiplayer enabler for Civ2. It's unofficial, and fairly dodgy, but have a look at www.citeweb.net/gjay/mpciv2.html for more info. Other than that, there's still no news on the rumoured FIFA 98 RTWC Internet play patch - but rest assured, I'm on the case.

COMMAND & CONQUER 2: Tiberian Sun



To many a gamers mind, C&C 2 is Westwood's last chance to prove that they still know what they're doing for RTS games. C&C is still one of the best ever, but the expansion packs and add-ons have generally sucked. Does Tiberian Sun look like it's got what it takes? Hell yeah!

Category	Real time Strategy
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Westwood
Available	TBA

Just when you thought Westwood could milk no more out of the C&C legacy that lies burned in all our minds, along comes the overdue sequel we had all but forgotten about. Tiberian Sun, the sequel to C&C itself, is finally on the horizon.

Funnily enough we here at PCPP were only mildly entertained at the prospect. Once upon a time Tiberian Sun was the game we couldn't wait to come out. C&C had taken our gaming addiction to new levels of self-detriment and we hungered for the sequel that could only get better.

Problem is, that was a long time ago, and since then we've had more RTS games than you can poke a highly focused satellite beam at.

But could Westwood do it again? Could C&C2 offer yet another new dimension to the RTS genre and bring in the strategic gamers in droves? Quite possibly. If you want an RTS that contains the best of everything you've seen so far, C&C2 is determined to make you drool.

Command

C&C2 features a number of new elements (well, lots actually) not the least of which is 3D support, dynamic weather



conditions, hi-res screen resolutions, destructible environments, vast maps and a storyline that involves three sides — goodly GDI, naughty NOD and a bunch of Tiberium overdosed soldiers called The Forgotten. These sorry chaps were apparently loyal NOD troops before NOD decided they'd like to see what effects a tiberium breakfast had on them.

The background story details a tiberium covered Earth twenty years after the original C&C, with GDI migrating to Antarctica to escape the Tiberium plague

while the defeated NOD headed underground in order to re-establish themselves in the wake of Kane's death. There have been reports that Kane may well return in some resurrected state, but most of these have come from NOD die-hard fanatics with an obvious bias



and as such have been promptly shot. Still, rumour has it that Joe Kukan, the actor who played Kane, has been playing a role in the production of C&C 2 so we may just be surprised. Or not.

The game engine is as revamped as you'd hope it to be. Apart from 3D support to lend depth and snazzy effects (such as coloured lighting and transparent explosions), perhaps the most innovative addition is something we have so far not seen much of in RTS games - weather condi-

Not only can we expect fantastic graphics, but significantly enhanced gameplay as well

tions. C&C 2 will allow you to do battle in rain, snow, fog and at night (requiring perimeter lighting so your defences can see. Expect to carry out sneak commando style attacks under the cover of night). There's even rumours that other

environmental effects will come into play, such as earthquakes and volcanos ("Watch out for that slow-moving, heading-directly-for-you lava flow!" "Hah! I won't fall for that old trick my arch... aieeeeeee!").

Other new features include a waypoint system, unit experience, unit firing recoil and 3D terrain (all a'la Total Annihilation), battlefield zooming (so you can see the battle REAL close), dynamic terrain objects (animated trees, for



The downside of C&C2 rocking hard is the amount of add-ons that will be pumped out...

example) and, of course, a whole plethora of new units and buildings (realtime rendered, at that).

...And Conquer

Now for the dirt. What new toys to you get to play with? How about scuba divers, freeze tanks, disruptor tanks (remarkably similar to a certain unit in Dune 2), advanced Orcas (fighter, bomber and transport), hover tanks, 18 foot mechs in the true sense of the word, flame tanks, stealth tanks, tunnelling tanks, hunter-seeker drones for base defense... and this list only scratches the surface.

But perhaps the most important unit addition, the most overlooked and oft required necessity, the downright blatantly obvious must-have for any unit you deign to place on the field, is a bit of

simple, true to logic, brains. Hands up who remembers the immense stupidity of harvesters from C&C? Yes yes, you can put your hands down now, all 3 million of you. Well be bothered no more! C&C 2 claims to give brains to your troops. Try this on for size: harvesters will warn you if they are entering a dangerous zone and, more importantly, will turn back if you so choose. Bugger the 3D enhanced hi-res game engine, that feat alone is worth a round at the pub for whoever at Westwood came up with the goods!

Two

It goes without saying that the game is multiplayerable and,



without a doubt, this will be where the game truly shines (though Westwood have always done a darn good job in the single player campaigns). I, for one, am looking out for this title (after all, I need to chal-

lenge the great Peter Sharpe, my brother-in-arms, in more than just one arena of Total Annihilation). Keep an eye out, PCPP will be first with the tiberium-saturated review.

Ashton Mills

Hothouse Creations



THE FIRST LOOK by Derek dela Fuente

Three ex-MicroProse's start up their dream game company under the Eidos banner.

Hothouse Creations is a relatively new developer, but if you look at the CV of the 3 people in control of the company -

Peter Moreland, Rob Davies and Martin Carr - their involvement and experience within the games industry is impressive, going back to the early Telecomsoft days. The games they have been involved with, from marketing to management, are classics. All are from MicroProse, where they met up. Stunt Car Racer, Transport Tycoon, Gunship 2000, Grand Prix, Midwinter and DogFight, the list goes on and on. Add Steve Goss to the equation, who was the producer on X-Com, and you have knowledge, experience and understanding about not only what makes a good game, but a core team designing and developing 3 titles for Eidos: Cutthroats, Gangsters and Abomination, which could well turn out to be top titles!

Gangsters

Category	Strategy/Action
Players	1
Publisher	Hothouse/Eidos
Available	Christmas 1998

Think of a game based around Gangsters - you will find it hard to come up with more than a couple of products. The team expressed the view that if there are any scenarios you may ever imagine you wanted to play within, then surely being a Gangster was one. The theme behind this strategy come action game is so obvious you wonder why no one has thought up the idea before.

Set in a fictional city but bearing a certain resemblance to

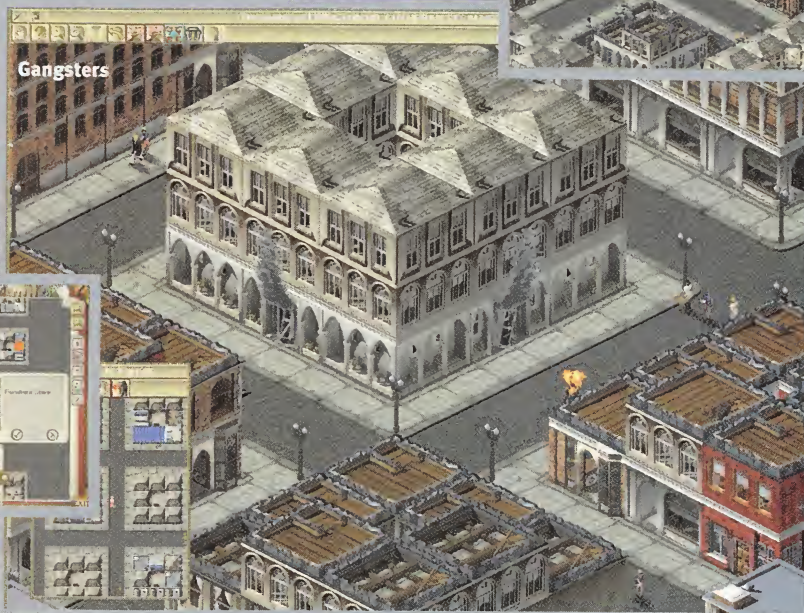


Rob Davies, Peter Moreland & Martin Carr



The Gangsters Team

Chicago in the 30s when the mobsters ruled, they have pulled into the game an extensive and exciting list of parameters. All the devils attributes and actions that any



gang would use to make more money are here. The mentality of a mobster comes across intensely! The game blends management with strategy and action achieving a highly motivational simulation game. Starting off within a small area in the city the objective is to rule the whole 1000 plus city blocks. Bribe officials and judges, get to jurors if any of your gang are taken to prison, defend your territory by any means, be it physical or by

threat, delegate individuals to sort out any trouble, recruit new members - the list is endless. Endless situations evolve as you would expect depending on your decisions, some good, some disastrous. The more money, the better weapons you can buy. Bring in top mobsters from other areas to ensure your squad of hit men are the best.

Gangsters might appear fairly

straight forward and clinical but the depth is quite remarkable. The isometric map allows you to zoom in on any location and move into buildings. You are part of a living world where people will move around and cars drive along the roads, conveying realism. It is when you start to interact, give members tasks, ensure you have the right documents to get into a building or



even set up a forging press to achieve this, you then start to grasp the endless options you can undertake. Information will be conveyed by reading daily newspapers or flipping to many menu screens. You can invest in stocks and appear to play the game in a fairly legitimate way so the authorities do not focus on you. Opening up some legitimate business while at the same time running some black-market scams is a clever play.

Cutthroats

Category	Strategy/Action
Players	1
Publisher	Hothouse/Eidos
Available	Christmas 1998

Hothouse Creations games has a theme running through all their games - Strategy and action, but they craft each game to offer variation so that each has a unique quality, look and flavour.

Instantly Pirates may spring to mind, but this has no sword fighting action and offers a more realistic gaming experience with a strong storyline. Set in the fifteenth century you will explore the newly discovered Caribbean. Weeks, months, and years on the high seas are on offer and the game spans over 100 years.

You are in charge of your own ship and deception, extortion, abduction, torture and violence are within the master plan. As a pirate there are no real rules. You are in a massive living world where you can stop off at any number of ports and reap real havoc. Every port has its own

unique personality and look. Land at any of the 70 ports and find it bristling with people and fortresses and many soldiers but some could be like a ghost town. Have you the army to fight or must you travel around gaining more money and men before you can confront certain forces?

Find a small island, colonise it, fight off the locals and gradually bring them onto your side. The complexity is not merely fighting but is based around strategy and tactical awareness. In any location you have populations of various sizes and force. Cutthroats offers the unexpected. If you are sailing around the Caribbean you will not know what other ships are around, how strong or devious other factions are and so you must take chances and learn.

Abomination

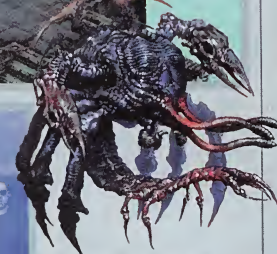
Category	Strategy/Action
Players	1
Publisher	Hothouse/Eidos
Available	Christmas 1998

Steve Goss, producer of X-Com: Apocalypse, is the man in charge of this game and has vast experience working on many other Microprose titles.

Abomination is an isometric



The Abomination team



changing brood."

The main enemy is the undead. The city is under siege and taken over and the player is sent to quell unrest, but you soon

action come strategy game and the nearest comparison Steve could give us was like a multi player version of a Quake type game. "We have devised a small squad tactical engine where the player will control up to four characters at any one time. The main focus is to take 4 characters from a collection of twelve through a very large and wide variety of locations. The squad is pitted against an ever changing enemy that mutates and recreates itself at every opportunity which in itself is a challenge for the players to actually adapt and become familiar with the ever

find out that the plot is much more sinister once you are within the fictional and futuristic American city. You will be able to explore many locations around the world from a nuclear base in Russia to a Lost Temple to the Antarctic. All the graphics sets are beautifully rendered and the game is played in real time. Although the images of this game and all the others were in their early stages you could see the attention to detail in the animation and in this case realistic 3D polygon creatures and characters were full of life and sinister aims.

Siege

3D Catapults and digital Boiling Oil are your tools of Medieval Destruction. Onward, Ho!

Category	Real time action/strategy
Players	1-2 (TCP/IP, IPX)
Publisher	Roadshow Interactive
Available	July 98

Okay, it had to happen. Ever since the limitations in the scale of Warcraft and Lords of the Realm 2 became apparent, there's been a gaping hole in simulation for assaulting castles with bloody big catapults, launching rocks weighing several hundred kilos at quivering Knights, and cringing behind battlements as burning balls of tar incinerate their comrades.

The only other PC game in the genre that springs to mind is



One of the best bits is blowing the crap out of infidel enemies and watching them realistically explode 10feet into the air



"castles", a relic from the 386 era, but that was concerned with the construction, and defense of the aforementioned chunky fortifications, in flakey two and a half dimensions.

Siege is totally 3D, with polygonal Serfs wandering around collecting manure in 3D rendered courtyards, also with architectural physics incorporated into the castle structure and every brick having intrinsic damage attributes. In theory, you could assault a wall with enough projectiles to

cause a realistic collapse, and your troops could swarm in over the wreckage. Or so we are led to believe, as I never managed to knock any bricks out. The solid surfaces take an insane amount of punishment, so I always gave up and aimed for the weaker points, namely the drawbridges and peep-holes.

Bring on the butchers!

Your perspective is in the eye of God style, hovering above the field. You can switch your view

around, perhaps not with the ease of Syndicate Wars, but it's functional enough. It basically jumps to views behind the selected troops, whence you direct them to do nasty stuff to the bad guys. It's fundamentally a Real Time Strategy game, with finer control over things like exactly where to aim the Catapults and Ballistas. You direct archers to focus fire on a particular group of defenders, then bring in the Battering Ram to take out the front gate! At which point your Knights charge in and butcher everyone.

That's the direct approach, the other basic method is to neutralise the defenders on the upper level, and

send in the "Ladder men", who risk their lives to place a ladder precariously between the battlements, again to allow your sword-bearing Knights to swarm over the barriers and start hacking people to pieces. You have to cover the ladders, though, as any archers that manage to reach them will shove them off the wall, sometimes with a Knight still attached!





...And then throw big rocks at em!

Also, simply because the siege engines are designed to crack enormous fortified rock walls doesn't mean they can't be used against infantry, no no! Sconning a Knight with a huge rock as they jog nonchalantly behind a balustrade provides enormous humour value. They get thrown a couple of metres into the air, completely spammed inside their armour.

So, once you've softened the defenses and sent in the troops,

as long as you can overcome their Knights with numbers, then your troops will seek out and claim the flag from the middle of the Castle, and signal your success. Certain castles will have key personnel in the dungeons who will help you once released, including veteran Knights and archers, engineers who will manufacture new siege engines and spies who will scope out fortifications and supply useful sieging information. Additionally, soldier morale will be modelled, as in the men on the losing team will

(left) the ability to switch to first-person mode and look through the eyes of any attacker or defender sounds great. Here an archer takes aim at a catapult

whimper with fear when ordered to attack, and do so only in a reluctant, halfhearted fashion whereas veterans or soldiers on the dominating side will charge without hesitation, and fight like bloodthirsty professionals.

Shoot the heathens

This being cool all in itself, it gets even better as you can choose, a'la Dungeon keeper, to possess one of your soldiers, and shoot incendiary arrows at the simpering heathens yourself! This mode is way cool, with 3Dfx support and full parabolic trajectories, it just looks awesome.

In the present version, you can't run around though and you can't do it with the Knights, but it's still heaps more effective than letting the slightly flakey AI do the shooting for you. However, as always, this is a preview from an early beta version, and thus may change.

There will be 14 full Castles to conquer in the full version, and once you've won them, you must also defend them from recapture! This will add some cool variety to the whole game, with your troops trying their darndest to set the enemy siege engines on ablaze with flaming arrows, and hacking the heads off invaders as they clamber up the assault ladders.

The version we played was not final, and a good thing too, because it made the fastest computer we used chug like a 486. This should definitely be fixed before release though, and it does look so absolutely gorgeous we'd be willing to sacrifice a frame or two per second!

Hendry Saunders



Tank Platoon 2

The high end hard core military sim genre is on the rise once again, thanks in no small part to the advances of 3D acceleration. Just like the real thing, but without the blood, death and destruction, and all from the comfort of your own home. Tops!

Category	Tank Sim
Players	1-5
Publisher	Microprose
Available	May 98

Firepower, mobility, shock action and manoeuvrability bring about immediate and violent action to generate armoured combat power! After playing this game (in beta) for the last two weeks, it is my opinion that Jane's have serious competition on their hands with regard to realistic combat simulations. Look for my full review on the completed product next month and we'll see if it lives up to this preview.

TP2 places you in command of a four-vehicle M1A2 Abrams tank platoon, so the emphasis of the game is at the tactical level of war, rather than operational or strategic. For laymen, this means the "sharp end". It's your four tanks, with additional forces under command such as another one or two tank platoons, a number of M2/3 Bradley platoons, complete with infantry (so they can dismount and clear ground dangerous to tanks), recon Humvees, M113s, and "at call" MLRS, conventional artillery, Apaches and strike aircraft.

Light bedtime reading

The game comes with a comprehensive 280 page manual that takes you through all elements of game play, briefs on the four campaigns in Gulf War II, North Africa, Moldavia, and WWIII. It then goes on for some eighty pages to give you significant knowledge of each type of main gun round, US Army tactical doctrine following the Air Land Battle doctrinal approach to warfare and many excerpts from unclassified TRADOC manuals. It also grounds you in protective



armour and what you are up against in terms of battlefield wire guided, laser, IR, top attack and tandem warhead anti tank weapons. Good solid bed time reading! This is underpinned within the game by training at the Basic Armour Course, and then "follow up" combined arms training at the National Training Centre. The latter exercises you in things such as Movement to

Contact, the Hasty and Deliberate Attack, Defence in Sector and Counter Recon.

Moving to the game proper, the graphics are clear and smooth on a P166. I could not enable 3Dfx on the beta, but I was impressed nonetheless. The final release will support 3Dfx and D3D. Sound was very good, with verbal comms inside the tank great, complete with feedback from the

gunner if you were getting low on rounds. But, considering the M1 has a gas turbine engine, I expected more grunt from the rear and more hydraulic noise from turret movements.

Take that Saddam!

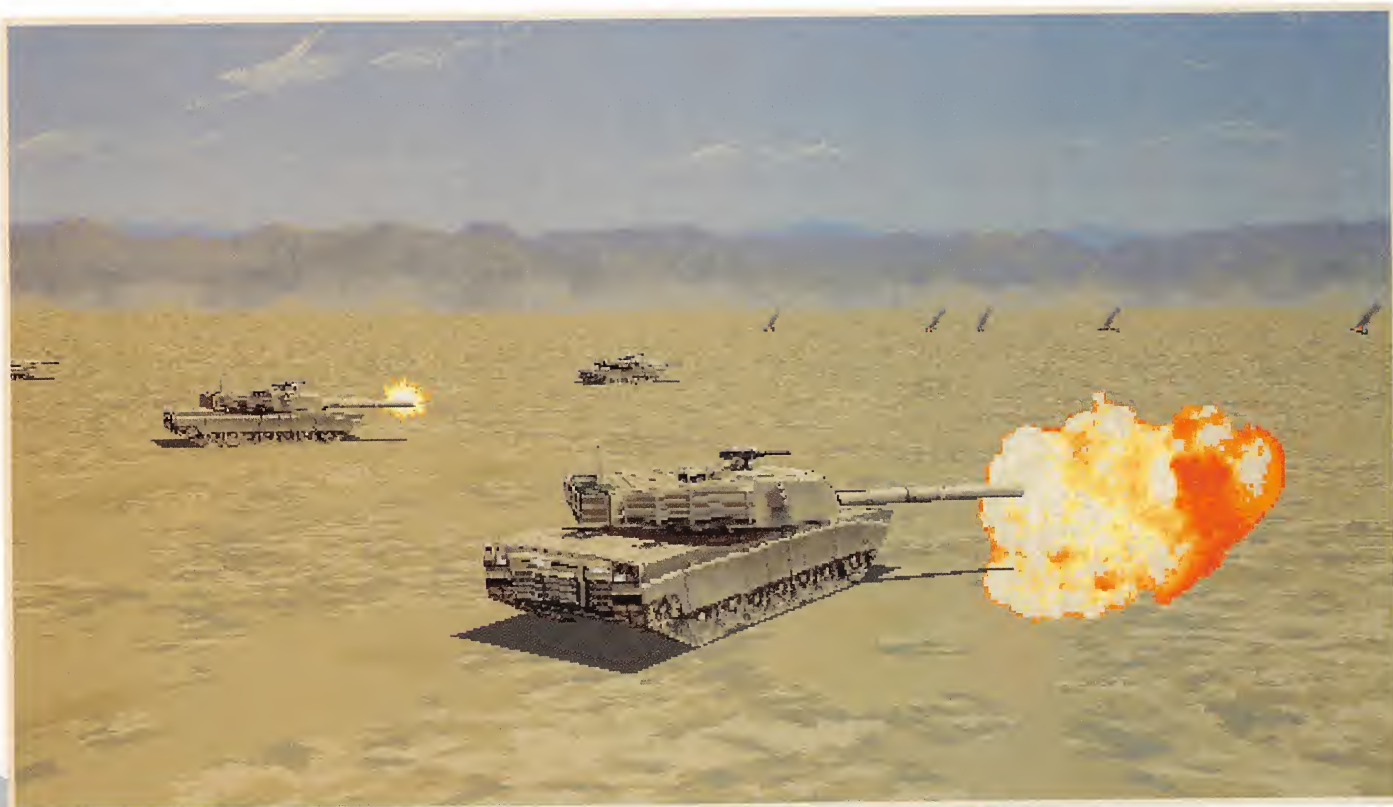
Single and Campaign missions are available and also included are 10 re-enactments of Gulf War battles. A random mission generator is also planned for the final release. Mission



Authentic tank innards. We expected nothing less. Plenty of wanton destruction too (top). Looking down the barrel of a gun...

orders follow the standard NATO briefing method, sometimes taking two or more pages. The only other game to do this is Longbow, but TP2 debriefings beat Longbow hands down!

Once inside the tank you com-



mand the Platoon from your Inter Vehicular Information System (IVIS) through an active mouse interface or keyboard control. This links you with all friendlies in the air land battle and allows you to point and click your way setting waypoints for vehicles and giving them instructions on what to do once there.

Prosecuting villagers...

For example, if your task is to clear a village, you can set a waypoint for your two sections of tanks to go to Grid X and Y and provide fire support to an infantry assault. Then task the Bradleys to take the infantry to another grid, dismount and assault to clear the village. Leave it to the AI of all the troops to carry out their tasks, including your gunner, while you select likely routes for enemy withdrawal. This way you are prepared to drop artillery on them if they escape. After the assault, issue orders for your tanks to prosecute through and mop up, while at

the same time sending Humvees or Apaches forward to recon while you secure the position. Good gut wrenching stuff, and the only area the IVIS lacks in realism is that it shows rounds and missiles flying across the battlefield. Only a JSTARS could pick that up (perhaps) and the bandwidth is just not there to put it on IVIS, but, nonetheless it does add to the game.

Interactive TV goes to war

From the command position in the tank you can zoom in and out on the IVIS to see the lie of the land and plot your waypoints. Your primary instrument other than the IVIS is the Commander's Interactive TV (CITV) which you use to designate targets for your gunner, then go on to the continue scanning the battlefield. You can also look through the Gunner's Primary Sight (GPS) and override if necessary through CITV or by slaving the GPS to the CITV. Thermal sights also give you the ability to fight at night and see



See tanks burn authentically with real simulated fire.



7.62mm! Watch them get hit and fall, but after lying there for a while they disappear! I hope this is a Beta fault. Watch out for enemy Hinds and Havocs, and watch as your ground and air forces engage them using advanced AI.

Multiplayer gaming is supported for up to five players. One commands the platoon, and the fifth player acts as the enemy. This was not active on the beta, but I will review it in detail because two sided battles are the ultimate test of your tactical skills. Through the mud, the blood and the green fields beyond! Send me the final release please Microprose!

Maj. Ian Lindgren



through forests and scrub.

A new game feature has been introduced in this game, enemy and friendly ground troops, and enemy troops can destroy your tank! So use the gun to frag them by hitting nearby vehicles or engage them with the



Neophyte

<http://www.aliensoft.com/neophyte/contents.html>

Category	Action/RPG
Players	1 (1-4 in full version)
Publisher	Alien Software
Available	Now (full version 1999)

Our sister magazine, Hyper, recently took a staff vote (which also included several Powerplay members, I should add) for the best game of 1997. Clear winner, easily fending off the challenge from nearest rival Quake 2, was Final Fantasy VII on the Playstation. Don't look so surprised! Japanese console RPGs are cool again, don't you know? Alien Software are certainly aware of this.

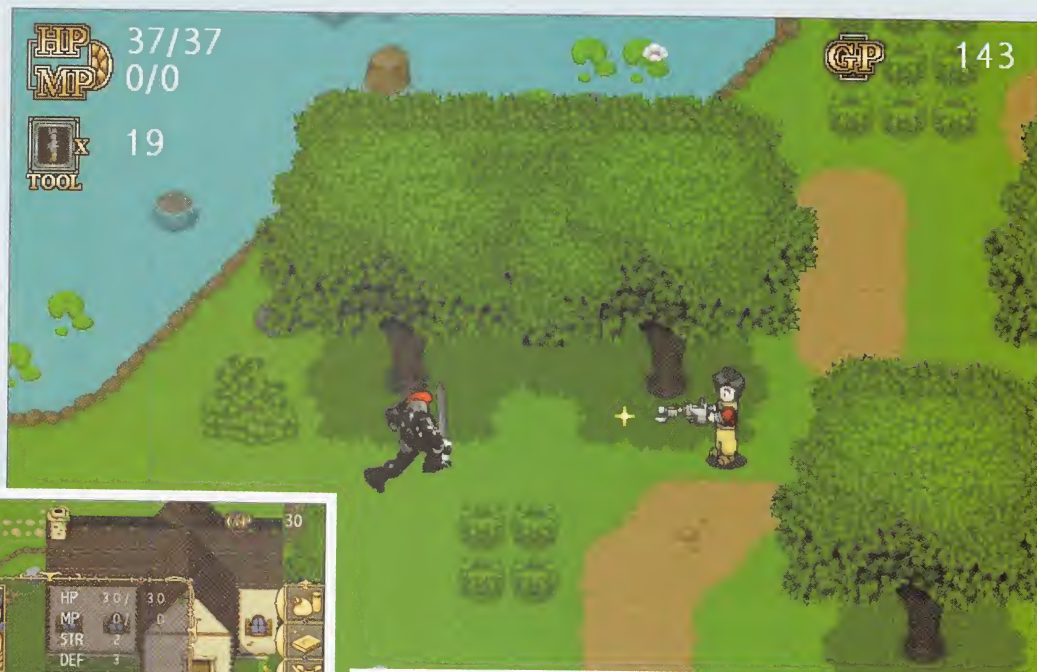
They've been hard at work creating Neophyte - a Japanese-flavoured action/RPG for the PC. But can it work? Do we actually want to play this type of game on our PCs? Apart from Legacy Of Kain, I cannot think of any console-style RPGs that have appeared on the PC. I asked Mike Young, Alien's self-proclaimed "Fearless Leader" (aka their Producer), whether he thought there was any room for games like Neophyte.

"We think the market is out there. RPGs are starting to gather strength again. Our main target audience are the young adults who grew up on games like Zelda and Secret of Mana on their Nintendo's and now have PCs and wax nostalgic for their console games."

The essence of Japanese RPGs distilled

A quick glance at Neophyte in action is all that's needed to recognise the heavy influence of such classic titles. The game is played entirely from an overhead perspective and the emphasis in the gameplay is very much on exploration and action. Not only is the anime graphical style very familiar, but Neophyte also strives to capture the essence of timeless playability common to most Japanese RPGs. What is this essence, though? What makes Japanese RPGs so special?

"We really like the unique look of anime - in games, manga, and



Why is it that anime characters always have such shiny hair? Brylcream?

movies. You do not often see that style of art anywhere else. We also like adventure games where the game tells a story. A good console-style RPG blends the two very well."

Yes, it's the story. It's what you keep coming back to, it's what draws you in and makes sure you can never leave until you've finished the whole game. Great stories. Epic stories. Stories that span the full emotional spectrum. This is the tradition in



still detail the ever-so-sad events which precede the game, while the lovely musical score tugs at all the right heart strings. It's looking promising.

Innovative distribution method

Presently, Alien will have given a shareware release to the game's first episode, entitled The Journey Begins. Over the next twelve months, they plan to put out a further three episodes, also as shareware, each one introducing you to a different character from the Neophyte world. In a brave and somewhat innovative move, the final release next year

will combine the four episodes, enabling multi-player network play with each player assuming the role of one of the four main characters. But according to Mike, "the logistics [of network play] are mind boggling. I think we can make it work, though." Phew!

The full version will also feature magic spells (not available in the shareware), special moves for the characters, as well as the visual frills of new artwork and animated cut scenes. Oh, and not forgetting the "compelling story about four teenagers who band together to fight an evil so great it threatens all life as we know it." Hmm, now I think that's the true essence of the Japanese-style RPG.

David Wildgoose



which Neophyte is following and, hopefully, making its own mark. Setting the mood perfectly, and tearfully, are the introductory scenes. Gorgeous anime

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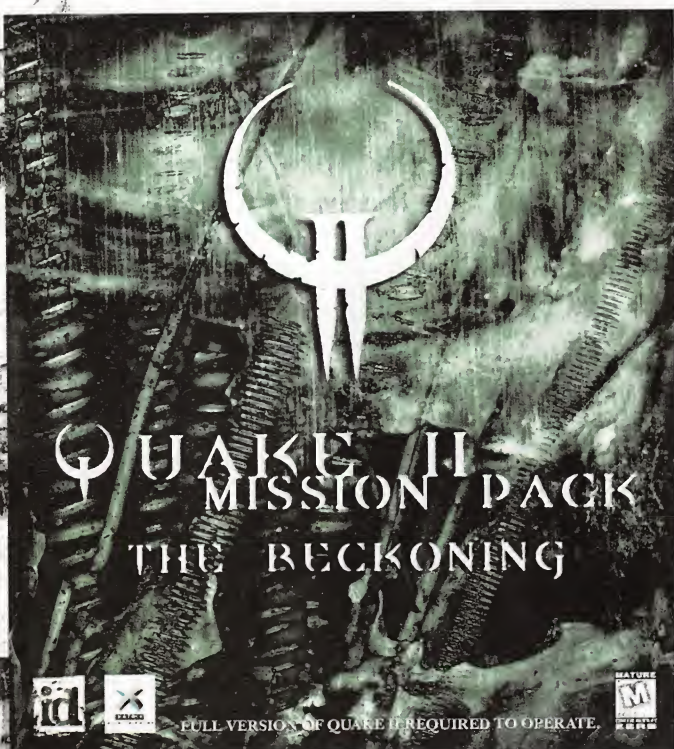
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South Park Quake

<http://southpark.scoots.com/sp.asp>

For those of you not in the know, South Park is....well, actually, hold on a sec. If you don't know about South Park because you're only a little 'un, it's probably best that you keep it that way. South Park is most definitely not for the kiddies. If you thought the Simpsons was about biting social commentary, and if you thought that (in the past) the Simpsons were on the cutting edge of what was socially acceptable on TV, then you 'aint seen nothing yet. South Park is like the Simpsons on speed, smack, acid, cheesy poofs, and a healthy diet of petrol sniffing.

Simpsons on speed

South Park pulls no punches. It's centred on a small American town in Colorado, with a standard block of weird and wonderful characters. The four main characters are 3rd graders; Kyle (the Jewish kid), Kenny (the poor kid who dies nearly every episode), Cartman (the fat kid with a fawning mother, an impressive potty mouth, and an affectation for Cheesy Poofs and Snacky cakes), and Stan (the erstwhile leader of the group, fond of projectile vomiting over girls), though there are a host of other regular characters too. Like the school Chef, who enjoys singing songs of love and extreme lust at any given opportunity, or Mr Garrison, the teacher that 'just acts gay to pick-up chicks', or Mr Hanky, the Christmas turd. Well, you should be becoming aware of just how weird and screwed up the series is by now. Simply, if you haven't seen it (and you're mature enough to deal with the content), then you definitely should do so. 8:30pm Saturdays on SBS.

Cheesy Poof gun

But that's not all. Some guy who goes by the name 'Scoot' is creating a very schmick looking South Park TC for Quake2. There should probably be at least a beta release out by the time you read this, but at the moment



it's looking as though it will be mainly a deathmatch scenario, with a variety of different characters to choose from. The whole town of South Park should be included, and the characters will all have different abilities, weapons, and power-ups available to them. For instance, Cartman attacks with his Cheesy Poof Gun (as well as his flaming gas attack from the rear, in homage to the alien butt probe episode), can't jump very high (he's kinda fat),

All your favourite SP characters, in a lovingly recreated South Park arena

and can use the 'Weight Gain 4000' as a special powerup, making him even larger and more powerful (beefcake! BEEFcake! BEEEEFCAKE!!!). And then there's Kenny, the kid that dies gratuitously almost every episode, who will get a point for every time he is fragged rather than the other way around, or Stan, who uses projectile vomit as his attack, or Chef who uses a double chainsaw to attack (while he croons 'I wanna make love to ya wooomaaaaan'). And it looks like even Starvin' Marvin the Ethiopian will get a run too. He'll probably use a turkey bone as his weapon (and will just say 'sweeeet' a lot). And to top it all off, the designers will be including Big Gay Al's Big Gay Boatride, from one of the most hilarious episodes to date (the one that featured George Clooney as Sparky the gay dog).

It might sound like a strange idea for a TC, and initially we were a little dubious as to the quality of the end product, but this really does look like it will be a professional quality TC that keeps the stupid and gross ethos of SP as well as including plenty of bigtimefun gameplay. Check it out at the web page above.

Gareth Jones



Wanna know whart Kenny was really saying? www.geocities.com/hollywood/academy/7175

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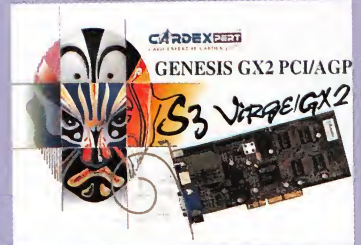
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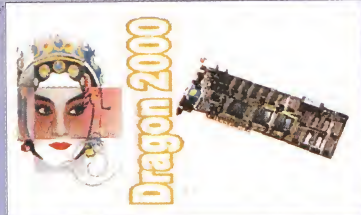
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Total Annihilation: Core Contingency

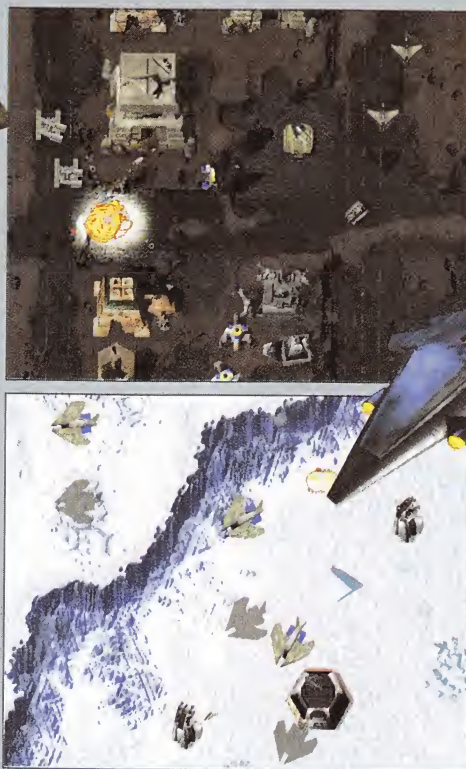
Category	Real Time Strategy
Players	1-8
Publisher	Cavedog
Available	2nd Quarter '98

Cavedog know their stuff. Rather than just try and cash in upon the success of TA by releasing mission packs with a couple of token new units and a few new scenarios, they've gone the whole hog and are about to release a complete sequel style add on, with a new storyline, heaps of new units, enhanced multiplayer settings, along with the actual Cavedog map and unit editor that was used during the design of TA.

It's set some time in the future when the Arm have won the war, just about wiped the Core off the face of the galaxy, and have begun a galactic clean up campaign. However, it isn't all peace and green politics - the Core had a last gasp contingency plan in place, where one of their commanders was stashed on a remote planet. And luckily enough for the Core,

that planet was caught in some kind of flux which allowed the commander access to other universes. And he's brought back some kind of 'universe collapsing' device to get rid of the Arm (along with the rest of the universe) for good. So when Arm forces find out about it...well the battle is joined once again. You can play as either the Core or Arm, but either way you can expect some more huge mega battles to take place.

There's around 75 new units in TA:CC, which along with the 150



75 new units! We're only just coming to grips with the existing ones!

from the original TA plus all the units released for download will make for plenty of variety in strategy, and to compensate for those even-more mega battles, multiplayer games will now allow up to 500 units at a time. And some of the cool sounding ones include a battleship sized submarine with guided missiles, a hovertank, units that can resurrect downed comrades (provided they are still at least vaguely intact), cloaked units, mine layers, and the list goes on, and on, and on.

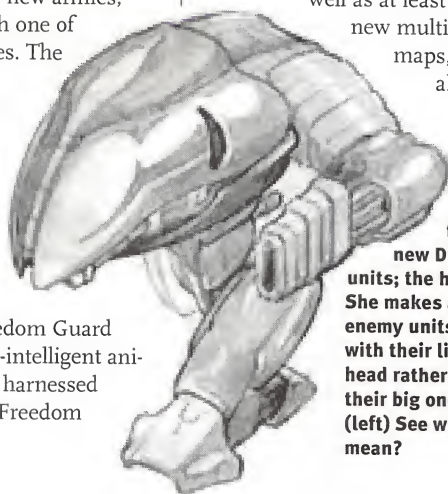
Cavedog have been listening to what TA fans want too - there will be more than a couple of huge water based maps for some mega naval battles and they've even pumped up the AI a little too, fixing some of the few minor bugs from the original release. You will need the original TA disks to play Core Contingency, but if you still haven't gotten into the TA mindset, now would be a very good time to do so.

Dark Reign: Rise of the Shadowland

Category	Real Time Strategy
Players	1-8
Publisher	Activision
Available	Soon

It's not just Cavedog who are into expansion pack mode, Activision and Auran are also hard at work on their forthcoming addition. Similarly to TA:CC (see above), DR:RotS has it's own complete storyline, and isn't just a continuation of the original game. Instead, this time around there will be two new armies, each aligned with one of the original forces. The Imperial Shadowhand are experimental forces of the Imperium, and are almost total war machines, be they made of flesh or metal, whereas the Freedom Guard Xenites are semi-intelligent animals that can be harnessed and used by the Freedom Guard troops.

It's an interesting idea to use the Xenite units. They will usually need a human controller to take them into battle, and if the controller is killed then the animals will probably disperse or run away. So while they will be fearsome opponents, if the handler can be taken out then their threat will largely dissipate, which should make for some interesting tactical decisions on the battlefield. There will be 18 new single player missions as well as at least 30 new multiplayer maps, and all of the



(right) one of the new DR units; the hussy. She makes all the enemy units think with their little head rather than their big one. (left) See what we mean?



best conversions bundled on the CD, and to top it all off there will now be support for up to 8 players through Activision's online server too. The only downside to this is that coupled with TA's expansion pack there isn't going to be a lot of spare time for normal type activities. Ah well, who cares about that sort of thing when the gaming is this good!



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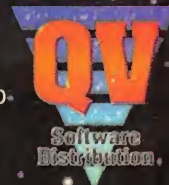
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Burnout

Category	Drag Racing Sim
Players	1-32
Publisher	Bethesda Softworks
Available	Soon

We have to admit that the first thing we did when we heard about Burnout was howl with derision and mirth. I mean, how can you make a game about a race that lasts around 6 seconds? Well, according to Bethesda you can, and it promises to be an extremely realistic sim rather than just a 'wait for the lights to go green and floor it' kind of game. Just in terms of the race, you'll have to master things like applying your line and transmission brake so as to not give power to your forward wheels and so going over the start line while still keeping the revs up and the power to your rear wheels, all while holding the clutch in preparation for the green lights on the christmas tree. Sound complicated? Well, it is, but that's only the race.



No, this is not an April fools joke - there really is a drag racing game in the works. And it looks great too!

At least a fair proportion of time will have to be spent in the garage, modifying and setting up your car for the races. And seeing as most of the drag racing tracks from America will be included the cars all require different set-ups for each track, depending upon such things as

altitude, the type of surface, the weather, and so on. It does look to be an impressive game, and there is the promise of Internet play for up to 32 players at a time too. Because only two players race each other at one time the rest of the contestants wait on the sidelines and watch for their

chance. And it's not just dependant upon the fastest type of car either, because Burnout is as realistic as possible, they will be using a class system for cars as well as what's called 'bracket racing'. Whatever that is.



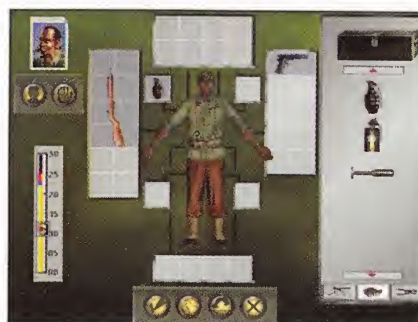
Soldiers at War

Category	Turn Based Strategy
Players	1-4
Publisher	SSI
Available	2nd Quarter '98

It's been a while since a decent turn based micro-management war game has been released - the last one of any note was probably X-Com: Apocalypse. Most fans of the genre (like us) will have already

finished X-Com and will be waiting with baited breath for Jagged Alliance 2 to finally hit the shelves. It's not really fair to say that Soldiers at War might 'tide us over' until then, because if it turns out to be as good as it looks then Jag2 might just have to take the backseat for a while.

Soldiers At War is set in World War 2, and you can take the part of either the allied or German



Yes, it's yet another tank sim, but it looks pretty damn good. Oh, how pretty machines of mass destruction can look when given the 3Dfx treatment

grenades, and plenty more - along with the ability to jump into dis-

abled tanks so as to use their heavy machine guns. We haven't been able to get our hands on a playable demo as yet, but the interface looks to be very much the same as X-Com, from an isometric perspective with a grid overlay for troop movement. In fact, SAW looks a lot like X-Com set in WW2, albeit with much prettier graphics - and that's fine with us.

forces at the latter stages of the war. Depending upon which side you choose, you'll be presented with a campaign spanning at least 15 missions. They will be a composite of vaguely accurate historical scenarios along with quite a few 'what if' scenarios, particularly from the German side of things, seeing as they didn't do so well during the latter stages of the war. But you will be involved in such incidents as D-Day, raiding German V-2 Rocket silos, chasing the retreating Germans through a bombed out Dresden and so on. And there will be heaps of weapons available too, like bazookas, Sten guns, flame throwers,



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Actua Soccer

Category	Football Sim
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Fox Sports
Available	2nd Quarter '98

The Actua Football range has always been close to the quality of the FIFA series, but in most peoples eyes has never reached the heights of FIFA at its best. However, those that enjoy Actua Soccer games for their fast paced gameplay and simple commands are in for a treat, because you can expect more of the same for Actua Soccer 2, and much prettier this time around too. Graphically, it looks like Gremlin may have outdone the wizards at EA, and to see this in 3Dfx mode is something to behold. It looks amazingly crisp and clear, and the motion capture is just awesome. Well, considering it's modelled upon Alan Shearer and the unbelievably talented Michael Owen, you'd expect it to be quite impressive, wouldn't you?

In terms of gameplay, Actua

have always tended towards a more arcade style console feel, and it doesn't look as though much will change with AS2 (or possibly VR Soccer 2, depending upon which title is preferred by the marketing types). We're talking about three or four buttons for passing, shooting, and lobbs, with the actions dependant upon where the ball is in relation to the currently selected player (for heading, bicycle kicks and the like, for example). And as with the previous Actua Soccer title, the gameplay will be faster than a real game, which apparently some people like, and designed in such a way as to make end to end football a commonplace occurrence. Again, apparently some people like this kind of thing. But if it's fast paced, action oriented football



you're after with stunning graphics, then Actua Soccer 2 is set to rock your world. Just don't expect a high degree of realism - not that there's anything wrong with that...

But will it measure up to FIFA RTWC? That's the big question.



Category	Football Sim
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	BMG Interactive
Available	2nd Quarter '98

One of the best things about the World Cup is that apart from being able to watch it, it also guarantees that there will be a rush of football sims timed to coincide. We're not sure what it's going to be called in this country, but this might well be one of the quality football games of the year. The graphics and motion capture look great, with proportionately correct players (unlike FIFA RTWC), and the

control method we're promised is extremely easy to learn, but difficult to master. So don't expect the type of key combinations required for special moves in FIFA to appear here.

And, somewhat thankfully, don't expect commentary either. Developers Z-Axis have decided that to help the player feel as if they are really there rather than have an annoying commentary team you'll hear calls and comments from your team mates. It's

World Soccer

Also Golden Goal or Three Lions

Fantastic! The developers have tried to do something different - no annoying commentators, and a great variety of teams to play as and against. Can't wait for this one



not exactly clear just what this will entail, but it's an interesting take on what has annoyingly become a standard for sport sims; looping commentary. Apart from this, it all seems to be pretty standard fare; team formation, starting players and substitu-

tions, player positions and so on will all be player configurable to a high degree. However, as we've seen with FIFA RTWC it's not just a question of having these

elements included in the package, they have to be done properly. Lets hope that Z-Axis place more importance on functionality than the prettiness of their menu system. Z-Axis don't seem scared to muck about with the formula in other ways either, rather than just use current world teams, you will be able to choose from around 50 International teams from both past and present. So you could end

up with England's World Cup winning 1966 team against present champions Brazil, and so on. Nice idea, huh? It doesn't take much to get us excited about soccer sims, but this is one that we're extra excited about. More soon.

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Diablo II

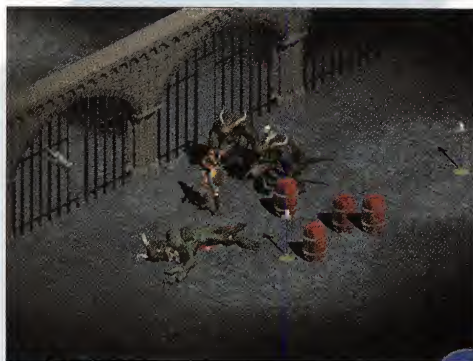
Category	Action/RPG
Players	1-4 (1-8 possibly)
Publisher	Blizzard
Available	Christmas'98

Last year's GOTY, Blizzard came from somewhere out of the blue. It's testament to the staying power of the game that despite the prevalence of cheaters using Battle.net, plenty of people are still playing. For many though, it's time to start looking forward to the sequel. Ah well, it's not that long until Christmas, and the way Diablo 2 is looking, it might be worth the wait.

This time, Blizzard are going for more of a traditional RPG feel, with NPC's for players to interact with and a much larger scope for the adventure. For starters, there will be at least four towns, each with its own wilderness area, and the NPC's will have a much more lifelike cast to them this time around, and will move around and 'live their lives' to a much higher degree.

And, as expected, there will be five new character classes to play with, though we only have information on three so far. The Necromancer promises to be a powerful character once you harness his abilities like

summoning a 'familiar' to fight and move in his place acting as his eyes and ears, or raising the dead to fight for him, or binding a live creature to fight for him. And there's the Paladin too, a fanatic for the forces of good who can repel undead forces with his devotion, or infuse his weapon with Holy power to cut through armour imbued with evil protection. And at times, he can also call upon the power of his God to enable him to move with impossible quickness, devastating all in his path - although this does damage himself as well. And then there's the Amazon, sort of like an



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updated Rogue, who can employ her impressive bow and arrow skills when necessary, as well as taking the occasional 'vital shot' when there's time to line up her adversaries vulnerable spots. But it's not just ranged weapons that the Amazon is proficient with, she's also quite handy with a spear, and can use it to trap the bad guys in one position allowing for them to be taken out at leisure.

There's still not a lot of information about Diablo2, but it's rumoured that monsters won't be confined to the underground, and there is a possibility

that they will band together to attack a town on occasion. You would be called upon to save the town...for suitable recompense from the denizens, of course. For multiplayer games, Blizzard are looking into allowing up to 8 players, as well as establishing a store for players to sell and buy items, though it's not clear just how this will be implemented. The most cheering information about multiplayer Diablo2 thus far is

that a) the player files will be kept on the remote server making it much harder to cheat, and that b) PK'ers will have a bounty on their heads.

Diablo was responsible for a huge chunk of many gamers' Christmas holidays last year, and it looks as though we can look forward to a fantastic Christmas '98, locked in a room with a computer, a phone line, a modem, and a copy of Diablo2. Bring it on!

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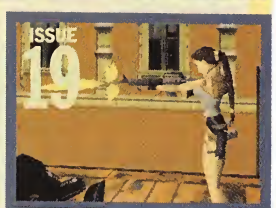


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Just because nothing got 90% or over doesn't mean they ain't no good!

We love this time of year. While all the big mainstream releases hit around Xmas, it's this dark zone on the calendar that often sees unexpected gems turn up for our gaming pleasure.

And thus has been the case. Heading the list of choicest gaming is Rage's Incoming. We always expected this to be just a straightforward 3D action shooter with gorgeous graphics, and praise be to the heavens, this is indeed what Incoming is. No frills, high thrills blasting is what the gaming world needs more of.

For adventure gamers Starship Titanic is here to save you. While not a big scoring classic - and certainly (like most games) flawed, the story by Douglas Adams shines and the graphics are a pleasure to be in.

Heralding the new era of DVD comes Tex Murphy Overseer. This is the third in the series which began with Under A Killing Moon (4th if you insist on counting Martian Memorandum), and all the way the Tex name has been synonymous with cutting edge technology.

In the Great-Looking-But-Dull Dept. we present to you Redline Racer and Shadow Master. Long gone are the days when new 3Dfx titles were unanimously met with "ooooos" and "ahhhhs", nope, sorry but we're looking at gameplay and unfortunately neither cuts it.

Next month we should finally have Starcraft for review, as well as the very exciting Tank Platoon 2. So hang in there, good games will be here again.



THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

95%+	PLATINUM The Best. Virtually faultless, reserved for games which cause loss of sleep from thinking of nothing else.
90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 months time.
60-80%	Competant and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible



REBELLION

This is the kind of game that we love here at PowerPlay - hard core, anal retentive strategy, and it's in the Star Wars universe too! Just a pity it isn't turn based, but still, a top game nonetheless.

Praise be to the force, Rebellion has finally arrived, putting an end to any speculation of it being vapourware. So, is it the next great title from the masters of all things Star Wars over at LucasArts? Well, sort of; it depends on what you were expecting. If you were expecting the next TA/C&C/Warcraft/Dark Reign in the Star Wars multiverse, then end it now, gentle reader. If, however, you expected a real time strategy game with depth, true strategy, real battle tactics and a heavy dose of resource management all within the Star Wars milieu, then this, my friend, is your own personal Valhalla.

Rebellion is set almost directly after the destruction of the first Death Star, which places it after Star Wars but before The Empire Strikes Back. You choose between commanding the Rebel Alliance or the Empire, but you don't play the part of anyone in particular; rather, you're a 'god' who has complete control over every aspect of your forces. The aim of the

game is threefold: control all the planetary systems in the known galaxy, capture Coruscant or destroy the Rebel base and capture and hold the key enemy figures - Mon Mothma and Luke if you're playing the Empire, and Emperor Palpatine and the Vadermeister if you're a Rebel scum. To achieve your aim, each side starts the game with seven special characters. These are your aforementioned Skywalkers as well as Han Solo, Admiral Piett and so forth that have special powers such as leadership, diplomacy and force powers. Using these figures wisely like in a good game of chess is often the key to winning or losing the game.

The Vadermeister, and below, Princess Leia, appearing in the Endor battle fatigues, more befitting a Chief of State than some of her racier outfits (yes, you know the we're talking about)



The mundane bits

Enter our old friend resource management, the love or bane of any strategy gamer. There are only three actual resources to manage - raw materials, refined materials and maintenance capacity - but there are so many facets of the game you have to keep tabs on that it's easy to get overwhelmed. This is where you may be disappointed, as Rebellion is a heavy management strategy game, rather than pure war strategy. There is an option to let your droid manage most of your affairs, but he only makes sure you are producing enough energy and raw materials to survive, rather than aggress-



WHAT THE ARJ WANTS

I may be getting ahead of myself by about five years here, but when are games finally going to begin linking elements and genres properly? (Let's just ignore failed efforts like Birthright and Muzzle Velocity and, to some extent, Rebel Assault.) I mean, imagine this: you control the galaxy with an iron fist in a strategy-type deal with Rebellion. You order a fleet of TIE Interceptor to take out a rebel troop carrier. Why couldn't you then jump into the cockpit of said TIE Interceptor and take out the enemy ship a la X-Wing vs Tie Fighter? Or if you had to send Han on an espionage mission to Coruscant, why couldn't it become a first-person jobbie like Jedi Knight? You could link these games on your HDD if you owned them, much like plug-ins or OLE and the main game (Rebellion, for instance) could call the other sub-game (XVT, JK etc) which took over, the results being fed back to the main game. If you chose not to personally lead a mission then you could simulate it. The whole Star Wars universe could be recreated in this way, and not only would it be a theoretically limitless single player game, but imagine the possibilities on offer for multiplayer. Perhaps this is where we are headed with games, and this is definitely the direction I want to see. If it ever happens I'll stockpile the Doritos and Jolt, pay a year's rent, phone bill and 'net charges in advance, and never leave my little room again. In case this idea rocks hard and heavy, I... um, copy-right it or something. So there.

that should never be considered. For example, I don't want to picture Bill Gates getting it on with Princess Leia in her gold bikini <shudder>.

Blowing stuff up

One great thing about Rebellion is the clear delineation between strategy and tactics. For



(above) Familiar faces and (below) familiar places. Rebellion includes worlds from the post-movie novels, like Sluis Van & Bpfassh



sive management to gear up for a war effort. This was the biggest disappointment for me, as I felt more like I was seeing the humdrum side of the Star Wars universe, rather than the exciting side. It's like being taken on a guided tour of CIA headquarters and being shown how the desk jockeys do data entry.

Bill Gates buys Coruscant

Something new from the LEC camp is the game interface, which is - how can I put this - a Wing5 emulator? That's right; there's windows with title bars and maximise/minimise buttons, drag 'n drop between windows



and even a task bar that holds minimised windows - just like the real thing! While this works well in an operating system, I can't help but question its use in games. After all, they're supposed to be an escape from reality (even more so with Star Wars based ones) and the pure philosophy of using OS mentality in a game brings together concepts



(above) the most impressive sight in the universe... (below) the tactical battle scenes, which, for the most part, work quite well.

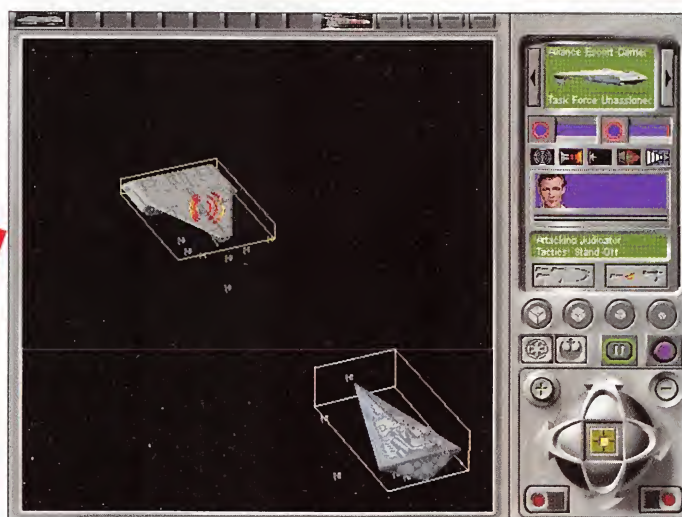
game. This is not a huge criticism, but it will disappoint many people who were looking for a more immersive experience. Still, for Star Wars aficionados and strategy buffs, this is a very impressive effort.

George Argy

me, all this retentive management is for one purpose alone - to fuel the battles for the galaxy. For the vegetarians out there, it is technically possible to take over the galaxy without force, using diplomacy and efficient macro management, but why the hell would you want to? Politics is about war, dammit!

In the end, I just didn't quite feel like I was truly a part of the Star Wars universe like I have with previous Star Wars titles. You

are so distanced from the actual events and look at them at such a high level that you never really feel like you're interacting with the



BEST manual EVER!

I've often said that games should ship with a decent manual, but this is almost ridiculous. Rebellion's manual is extensive and in-depth, leaving absolutely nothing out. This is a good thing. You will need to read the whole manual to be able to play the game to its full potential. This is a bad thing. As with most people, I prefer jumping into a game to see how much I can work out by myself after playing the game for a few days. After a couple of days of this, I might read the manual if I get stuck or need to fine tune something I'm doing. You can't do this with Rebellion. The menus, sub menus, icons and management system too complex to be intuitive, although it does make sense in a Wing5 kinda way after you read the manual. The online encyclopedia deserves a mention and is a good read if you want to find out things like Leia's turn-ons and turn-offs. OK, I'm a mid-eighties Carrie Fisher-obsessed fool. I admit it.

88%

Category Star Wars Strategy
Players 1-2
Publisher LucasArts
Price \$89.95
Rating TBA
Available Now

For This is strategy at it's grandest level. Enough depth of management to keep those sphincters taut for a long while.

Against You're too distant from the action. More a game for hard-core strategists and Star Wars fans rather than RTS heads.

Need P90, 16MB RAM, CD-ROM, Wing5

Want Not much more



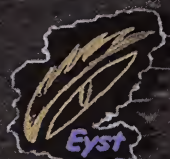
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TEX MURPHY- Overseer

Overseer continues the trend of the previous Tex Murphy adventures - it's just as playable and entertaining, and once again will push your PC to its limits.

Ever since Under A Killing Moon a few years back, the Tex Murphy adventure series has often been lumbered with the 'Interactive Movie' tag. I say 'lumbered' because so often the term 'interactive movie' denotes a pathetic excuse for a game, filled with third rate actors who aren't 'has beens' simply because they 'never were', churning out a plot that a

Enter; the blonde vixen

And so to the latest in Tex's (mis)adventures, Overseer, which does nothing to tarnish the name that Access Software have developed for games of this nature. It's actually not the latest of Tex's adventures - it's really a recounting of one of the first jobs he had for his own P.I. firm, so rather than continue on from where we left him at the end of The

guys down. And so down these mean streets a man must go....

Time to upgrade!

But you're going along for the ride with Tex, of course, down the mean streets that he walks.

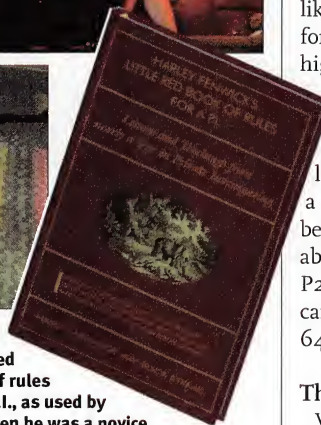
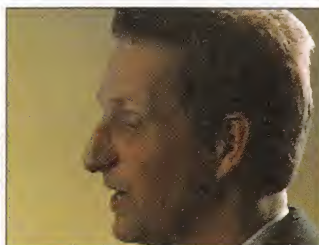
Well, you are if you've got the grunt in your PC that is. The box says that you'll need a P133 with 16MB of RAM as a minimum for the CD version, but my advice is to take that with a grain of salt. It doesn't take all that much PC power to run FMV sequences, but Overseer isn't just FMV, far from it. Much of the game involves you walking around (as Tex) from a first person perspective in a virtual world that either looks very nice (if you've got the power) or very grainy and very small.

Personally, I'd recommend a P166 with 32MB RAM as the base machine that you will need to run the game at a playable (and enjoyable) level. And that's just the CD version too. Overseer is the first game designed for DVD and other new innovations like AGP, and the requirements for the DVD version are even higher. A P200 should just

about see you scrape in to see the game in all it's glory and detail - although at a fairly lacklustre framerate. But this is a game you want to see at it's best, and you will only really be able to get the best results with a P233 or above, an AGP video card, a DVD drive, and at least 64MB RAM.

The plot thickens...

What about the plot though? Well, I really don't want to give too much away, because such a



The little red book of rules for a P.I., as used by Tex when he was a novice P.I., and much more naive. It's full of helpful hints such as 'don't fall in love with your client'. Tops!

developmentally disabled three year old could surpass, with a sprinkling of nonsensical puzzles and occasionally the odd plotline choice for the 'player'. It's quite sad really, because while they might not be able to live up to the expectations of the initial wave of 'multimedia prophets' who foretold how interactive movies would be the Next Big Thing, there is plenty of scope for the genre to develop into an accomplished, enjoyable, and respected one. The Tex Murphy series gives hope to this preceding argument, even though the term interactive movie doesn't strictly apply, because the series has been consistently enjoyable, it has always made the most of the capabilities of PC's at the time of release, and most importantly, all the Tex Murphy games have been great fun to play as well.

Pandora Directive, we're skipping backwards. The story begins in the 'present', after the culmination of the Pandora Directive case with Tex giving in to his paramour, Chelsea Bando, and recounting the tale of this first case, leading up to his first marriage - which is the latest stumbling block in Chelsea and Tex's developing relationship. It's a fairly standard beginning, a beautiful blonde (A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained-glass window - Chandler) named Sylvia Linsky walks into Tex's office and enlists his help to find the murderer of her father, whom nobody thinks was murdered, especially the police. But of course, the death of Linsky's father becomes only a very small part of an investigation that gradually uncovers a huge conspiracy and it's up to Tex to take the bad





The interface is powerful, yet simple, and makes manoeuvring around your environment easy and immersive. And even better, there's a variety of ways to control your movement too, keyboard, mouse, or a combination of both



89%

Category Graphic Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Access Software
Price \$79.95
Rating MA15+
Available Now

For An immersive, interesting, world full of (mostly) believable characters, and a very decent plotline to follow. Easy to use interface, and plenty of adventuring to be had. Looks fantastic if you have the necessary hardware. The hint system is easily the best of its kind.

Against Power intensive - you really do need a hefty PC to see the game at its best. A couple of the actors are still third rate (and that's putting it nicely), and there could have been perhaps a little more open-endedness during the plot.

Need P133, 16MB RAM, 4 x CD
PCPP recommendation: P166, 32MB RAM, 8 x CD

Want P166, 32MB RAM, 8 x CD
PCPP recommendation: PII 233, 64MB SDRAM, DVD, MPEG2 card, 16 x CD, AGP video card

3D NO SUPPORT FOR 3D CARDS IS INCLUDED, THOUGH YOU WILL GET ENHANCED GRAPHICS WHEN USING AN AGP VIDEO CARD

large part of the game is discovering what's really happening. Suffice to say that the plot is well constructed and moves along nicely. There aren't any multiple endings for Overseer though, largely because it's Tex recounting an adventure that has already happened, but the ending is a very good one - it's probably the last thing you would expect to happen, but it sets up the next two games in this trilogy nicely. And even though there is only one way to go about the adventure, due to the level of interaction

PLUS+



The Ritz Hotel
<http://www.xtreme.net.au/users/dsebire/>
 Tex has fans worldwide, and this is one of the best unofficial web pages around - and the maintainer, Darren Sebire, is Australian too.
Onya Darren!



(left) Conversations are handled fairly well, though it's often just a question of questioning everyone about everything, which can become a bit annoying.

stuck. Each hint reduces your score, but it points the way for you to go only for that bit, so you don't ruin the whole experience.



The puzzles, as with the other Tex games, are often something to do with number combinations for safes, or access codes for computers and so on, and though they are quite hard (keep a notepad and a pen handy, you'll need it) they are mostly integrated into the plot quite well, rather than just

being abstract puzzles thrown in for no reason whatsoever. All up, Overseer is a top Graphical Adventure / Interactive Movie, if you've played and enjoyed the previous Tex adventures, then you're gonna love this. And even if you haven't journeyed to the world of Tex Murphy before, Overseer will provide plenty of enjoyment, though of course it helps if you have an interest in this style of game.

Gareth Jones

afforded by the engine used by Access it's much more than a point and click adventure. You have freedom to move around all the locations you enter, and you will need to hunch down and look under beds and so on, and generally treat your surroundings as if you were really there - exploring every nook and cranny. Of course, this makes it quite hard to gain all the necessary clues, but Access have included their fantastic in-built hint system should you get

HINTS

3 Skulls of the Toltecs
A10 Cuba
Ace Ventura
Albion
Alien Incident
Alien Virus
Aliens Comic Book
Adventure
Angel Devoid
Anvil of Dawn
Archemedian Dynasty
Ark of Time
Azrael Tears
Bad Mojo
Beavis and Butthead
in Virtual Stupidity
Beastalker
Big Red Adventure
Blade of Destiny
Blue Force
Broken Sword
Bud Tucker in Double
Trouble
Buried in Time
Callahan's Crosstime
Saloon
Capitilism Plus
Chronicles of the
Sword
Chronomaster
Chronoquest
City of Lost Children
Clan Destiny
Club Dead
Colossal Cave
Congo: Descent into
Zinc
Conspiracy/KGB
Critical Paths
Cutthroats
Cyberia 2
D
Daggerfall
Dare to Dream
Dark Eye
Dark Sun Shattered
Lands
Darkseed
Darkseed 2
Deadline
Deamons
Deathgate
Demons Forge
Dinotopia
Discworld 2
Down in the Dumps
Dragon Lore 2
Dragonworld
Drowned God
Druid Daemons of
the Mind

Duke Nukem 3D
Dungeon Master 2
Dust A Tale of the
Wired West
Enchanter
Entomorph
F22 Lightning
Fable
Fade to Black
Gabriel Knight 2 The
Beast Within
Gene Machine
Goosebumps
Harvester
I have no Mouth and
I must Scream
In the First Degree
Infidel
Inherit the Earth
Jack in the Dark
Jewels of the Oracle
Jinxter
Labrynth of Time
Leisure Suit Larry 5
Leisure Suit Larry 7
Lighthouse
Lord of the Rings
M.A.X.
Might and Magic 4
Might and Magic 5
Monty Python and
the Holy Grail
Moria
Mummy Tomb of the
Pharoah
Neverhood
Nine
Noir
Normality
Obsidian
Orion Burger
Pandora Directive
Phantasmagoria 2
Planetfall
Police Quest 5 SWAT
Prisoner of Ice
Private Eye
Privateer 2
Psychic Detective
Quest for Glory 2
Rama
Realms of the Haunting
Red Alert
Resident Evil
Riddle of Master Lu
Ripper
Rogue Dungeons of
Doom
Shadoan
Shadows Over Riva
Shannara

Sherlock Holmes
Rose Tattoo
Shivers
Shivers 2
Silent Steels
SilverLoad
Space Rogue
Space Siren
Spellbreaker
Spud
Spycraft
Star Trail
Star Trek Borg
Star Trek Harbinger
Star Trek Klingon
Stonekeep
Superhero League of
Hoboken
Suspect
Suspended
Syndicate Wars
Targhan
Teen Agent
The Daedalus
Encounter
The Dame was Loaded
The Dig
The Last Express
The Orion Conspiracy
Timegate
Timelapse
Times of Lore
Titanic
Tomb Raider
Toonstruck
Torin's Passage
Touche
Treasures of the
Savage Frontier
Ultima 1
Ultima 4
Ultima 8
Urban Runner
Versailles
Wizardry Nemesis
Xwing vs Tiefighter

Cheats

Abuse
Actua Soccer
Afterlife
Agile War
Albion
Amok
Another World

Apache
Longbow
Archimedean
Dynasty
Armored Fist
Ascendancy
Back to Baghdad
Blood
Blood and Magic
Cave Wars
CivNet
Cricket '97
Descent 2
Destruction Derby 2
Deus
Duke Nukem 3D
Atomic Edition
Earthworm Jim
Elite 3
Fantasy Empire
Fatal Fury 3
Fatal Racing
Fighting Vipers
Final Doom
Gene Wars
Harvester
Heroes of Might and
Magic 2
Last Dynasty
Master of Orion 2
M.A.X.
Mechwarrior 2 Ghost
Bear Legacy
Mechwarrior 2
Mercenaries
Monster Truck
Madness
Red Neck Rampage
Syndicate Wars
Terminator Skynet
Theme Hospital
Time Commando
Tomb Raider
Warcraft 2
Warwind
Whiplash
XS

Codes

Alien Trilogy
Amok
Area 51
Blood
Blood and Magic
Carmageddon

Comanche 3
Crow City of Angels
Crusader No Regret
Crusader No Remorse
Cybergliadiators
Cyril Cyberpunk
Daggerfall
Darklight Conflict
Deadlock
Death Rally
Destruction Derby 2
Diablo
Dungeon Keeper
Earthworm Jim
Eradicator
Extreme Assault
Fury
Gender Wars
Gene Wars
Gex
G-Name
Harvester
Helicops
Hellbender
Heros of Might and
Magic 2
Hexen
Hunter Hunted
Hyperblade
Imperia Galactica
Independence Day
Interstate 76
Jazz Jackrabbit
Killer Ivan
KKnD
Krush Kill N Destroy
Lords of the Realm
Lost Vikings
Madden '97
Master of Orion 2
M.A.X.
MDK
Mechwarrior 2
Mercenaries
Monster Truck
Madness
Necrodome
Need for Speed

Need for Speed 2
Nine
Norse by NorseWest
Outlaws
Pod
Privateer 2
Quake
Quake MP 1
Quake MP 2
Rebel Moon Rising
Redneck Rampage
Reloaded
Road Rash
Settlers 2
Shadow Warrior
Shattered Steel
Sim Copter
Star Control 3
Star General
Strife
Terminal Velocity
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The Computer Games Specialists.

INCOMING

We cry as we write this, for never, in the history of gaming, has a game both looked so INCREDIBLE, yet played so badly. Sniff.

Graphically, Incoming is extremely impressive, and it's one of the major reasons why we were so excited about getting our hands upon this game for review. We saw the demo, we heard the talk about town, and we're talking about Incoming as salvation in a period where not much happens with games, the dreaded Post-Christmas months. But, all our hopes were for naught, Incoming is a sadly disappointing game, there's no two ways about it. Let's get one thing straight, first of all. Arcade-style games can be great, when done well, and fast and furious blow-em-up fests can be great fun and very exhilarating. Incoming is neither great fun, and neither is it all that exhilarating. It's just a very pretty, and very simple shoot-em-up which attempts to compensate for a lack of gameplay with pretty graphics.

State of the art 3D

As is the rage nowadays, Incoming features a true 3D world, and as far as 3D worlds go, this really is towards the top end of the scale. You really do get the feeling that you're in a physical world, rather than driving and flying around through a series of obstacles that pop up as you encounter them. You tend to get the feeling that these objects, the hills, the terrain, and so on, are always there - and you can almost picture little bunny rabbits lolling about in the quiet areas living peacefully until you drive over them in one of your tanks (animal activists, fear not, this doesn't actually happen). This is possibly best illustrated when you reach the end of a mission sequence. Rather than use FMV, or rendered CG to illustrate the events that are occurring, they actually just use the game engine, with some very nice camera angles and



schmick explosions and such. And they happen seamlessly from within the game too, when you complete your objective the 'camera' will pull away from you and move to the cut scene. Very impressive, I'm sure you'll agree, and features

like this go a long way to making Incoming a very decent game, even if not a great one.

Non-AI

But cool 3D (or, if you're lucky enough, Voodoo2) explosions, nice cut scenes, and a very impressive

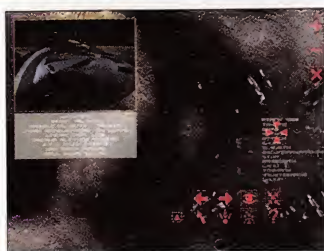


So you're looking at these pics thinking "Wow! This is one hell of a game!" You're wrong.





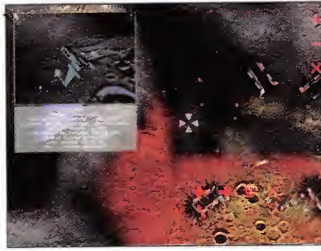
(below) part of the 'strategy' section, which is kinda like a glib & silly C&C style affair



game engine aren't enough to make a game enjoyable. It's an impressive foundation, and you would think that with a platform such as this to build upon, that the actual gameplay would live up to the potential. Sadly, it doesn't - even allowing for the fact that Incoming is heavily weighted towards the arcade side of things. It's not a terrible game, don't get me wrong, there is enjoyment to be had, but for the money you would be spending, there are plenty of other games of the same



style with graphics that aren't quite as impressive, but that are much more fun, immersive and involving to play. What lets the game down so badly then? Well, for starters, the AI isn't very impressive at all. Remember the arcade games from the eighties where the aliens would have their ships all follow the same trajectory, so that if you found the sweet spot, you just stuck your finger down on the fire button and watched them run into your plasma gun (or whatever) one after



another, after another, after another? Welcome to Incoming! The AI doesn't think, doesn't react to your movements (if you aren't in a mobile unit), and doesn't even attempt to appear intelligent. Each individual enemy unit seems to have a set path to follow, and all they will do is follow that path until you shoot them down. The exception to this is possibly the aircraft to aircraft sections, where you fly a jump jet in combat against alien fighter craft, and they do to a degree chase you,

though they aren't fond of any evasive tactics. If you happen to be shooting at a point in front of them, they will happily run into your fire, no matter how much time they have to adjust their flight path. And the flight model for these aircraft is...well, it's rudimentary to be nice about it. There's no real sensation of flight, or movement, or g-forces or anything like that either.

Where's the skill?

On the plus side is what you are asked to do in the single player missions. Rather than stick you in an aircraft, or a heli, or a tank and have the whole game revolve around your exploits in that unit, each mission requires you to take the pilots, drivers, or gunners seat in a number of units including a Cobra or Comanche helicopter,



Most of these pics are from the 'chase cam' POV, but that's just cos it's even prettier that way. Most of the time you'll be in 1st person mode



a matter of taking out the enemy and watching the cool explosions

a land based gun emplacement, the Harrier Jump Jet, 2 flavours of Tanks, and as the game progresses, a couple of captured alien craft too. The firing mechanism is, well, it's strange to say the least. You've got your crosshair, and your targeting system will light up the nearest enemy craft, but with any of the airborne craft you don't actually have to worry too much about getting the baddies in your sights because your guns will auto-aim (at least to a degree). And the secondary weapons are radar guided missiles (in most cases), so it's a fire and forget kind of affair. It's great to have control of different vehicles and craft to add variety to the missions, and this does to a degree work well, but the same premise applies to each vehicle under your control - it's

happen, and on many occasions it's just a question of lining up the waves of alien ships and land vehicles and waiting for them to run into your fire.

Cool missions

But again, on the plus side, the missions are varied and plentiful, and follow the 'war' between the humans and the aliens. You're required to do such things as pick up probes sent to the alien base, defend an aircraft carrier, defend an air base as your large transports take off, and eventually chase the aliens back to where they came from, and blow em up lots. For a game such as this, there is a coherent and worthwhile plot that evolves (sort of) as the game progresses, and again, it left us wondering just why the actual gameplay couldn't have had more attention paid to it. It really is a pity, just about all the elements required for a great game are in place, the graphics look absolutely fantastic (especially with the Voodoo2 - you just gotta see it to believe it), the mission structure is comprehensive and involving, the variety in craft you control is an innovative and welcome touch, and the multiplayer options are plentiful too. You can play as a team against the aliens, DM style (human v alien), or in a competition to see who can get the most kills, and

you get to choose which vehicle or craft you want to control too.

A tragedy, really

So, erm, at the risk of incurring the wrath of Mr Wildgoose, if you like this kind of thing then it will probably satisfy you for a little while. However, the initial feelings of enjoyment will quickly fade as you realise just how much better this could have been, how much more substance there would have been. The eye candy is great, the missions are more than adequate, and the variety is there...but that's about it really. It's the triumph of style over substance - the simplest test is to think about how appealing Incoming would be with the jaw dropping graphics stripped away, and my answer is 'not very appealing at all'. Such a pity. Maybe 'Incoming 2: The Return Of The Alien Nasties' will manage to merge both brilliant graphics with substantial improvements to the gameplay - now there's a game I'd love for sure! Even so, see if you can make a rich friend buy it, then go to his/her house and watch it for a while - the graphics really are awesome.

Gareth Jones



67%

Category Action
Players 1-16
Publisher Rage Software
Price STBA
Rating G8+
Available Now

For Absolutely fantastic graphics - among the best ever seen for PC, impressive mission structure, and good variety in craft to fly/drive /aim.

Against Rudimentary AI, and even for an arcade style shoot-em-up the physics of the craft aren't well done at all. Actual gameplay, as in your tasks and what you have to do to accomplish them, is significantly lacking compared to the quality of the rest of the game.

Need P166, 32MB RAM, 4 x CD, Direct 3d compliant card

Want PII 233, 64MB RAM, 24 x CD, Voodoo2

3D REQUIRES A 3D CARD, BUT SUPPORTS JUST ABOUT EVERY 3D CARD (AND COMBO CARD) ON THE PLANET, AND WORKS INCREDIBLY WELL ON THE VOOODOO2

Plus+

Rage

Most Games:

"The game has been chosen as the best of the best in the genre of shoot-em-up games." - PC Gamer

"The explosions are absolutely beautiful." - PC Zone

"Incoming is likely to be the most exciting of the year." - PC Zone

www.rage.co.uk

There's not much there really, but you can download the demo from their site.

"Not just a tank simulation – the Mother of All Battle Simulations"

M1 TANK PLATOON II



From the creators of the award-winning classic M1 TANK PLATOON comes the most realistic armoured land combat simulation anywhere in the world. Its actually two games in one, a superb tank simulation and a real-time strategy game.

- Control four M1A2 Abrams tanks in both the gunner or command positions or control up to 70 different vehicles from the map view - just like a real time strategy game.
- Everything here is hyper-real.. The detailed cockpits, the thermal view, the trees, the forests and even the helicopters that intelligently hide behind hills. In fact, it's as close as you can get to 70 different ground and air vehicles and their weapons systems without being arrested.
- Command platoons in dynamic campaigns set in Iraq, North Afric, the Russian Far East and Central Europe. Every mission is random and dictated by your strategic mastery from previous missions. The good news is as platoons experience tough combat, they'll serve you better.
- Face-off against the enemy as you and your fellow tank commanders engage in a multiplayer battle that will blow you away.



CD-ROM

M1 Tank Platoon® is a (registered) trademark of Microprose.
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MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com



STARSHIP TITANIC

It's been a long while since we've had Douglas Adams' wit, style, and poignancy thrust upon us, too long in fact. He's finally back though, with another impossibly high tech and cool spaceship that, erm, doesn't work. Would you like to fix it please?

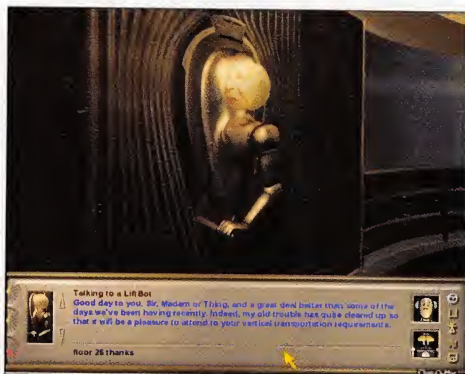
Don't you just hate it. You're relaxing at home one night, flicking on the computer because there's nothing on TV. Settling down in the comfy chair at your desk with a nice cup of coffee, you're ready to get stuck into that new game you picked up on the weekend. You put the CD in the drive and it starts whirring away. That's odd, you think to yourself, my CD drive doesn't usually make that sort of noise. And the whole house doesn't normally shake either! Within moments, you're leaping back from your desk as the ceiling disintegrates and a huge spaceship plunges through the roof into your living room.

No Winslet/DiCaprio love scenes, thank god

Once the dust settles after the crash landing, the door of the spaceship opens in front of you and a skinny robot appears. Fentible, for that is the name of your immaculately-polished guest, explains that the *Starship Titanic - The Ship That Cannot Possibly Go Wrong* - is having some, well... some functional difficulties, and he would appreciate it if you could come aboard to uncover the reasons why.

And so begins Douglas Adams' second venture into the world of computer games, over a decade

after his initial foray with *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*. Indeed, the game actually does commence in your living room. Upon running the install program, you will immediately find yourself looking at a side-board, a lounge, a computer desk and a couple of doors, all before there's even a hint of intro sequence or front-end menu.



Smartly dumped straight into the game, the first scenes act as both a cute tutorial and the opening credits. Not only does it teach you about how to play the game, but it manages to be highly entertaining to boot.

Interactive introduction over with, you now find yourself in the Embarkation Lobby of the *Starship Titanic*. Feeling shaken, considerably lost, and more than a little confused, a quick glance at your surroundings does nothing to make you reassured. It's here that you notice ST uses a fairly typical movement interface. You have a first-person view of the location and simply click the mouse to walk forward, examine things closely or turn around.

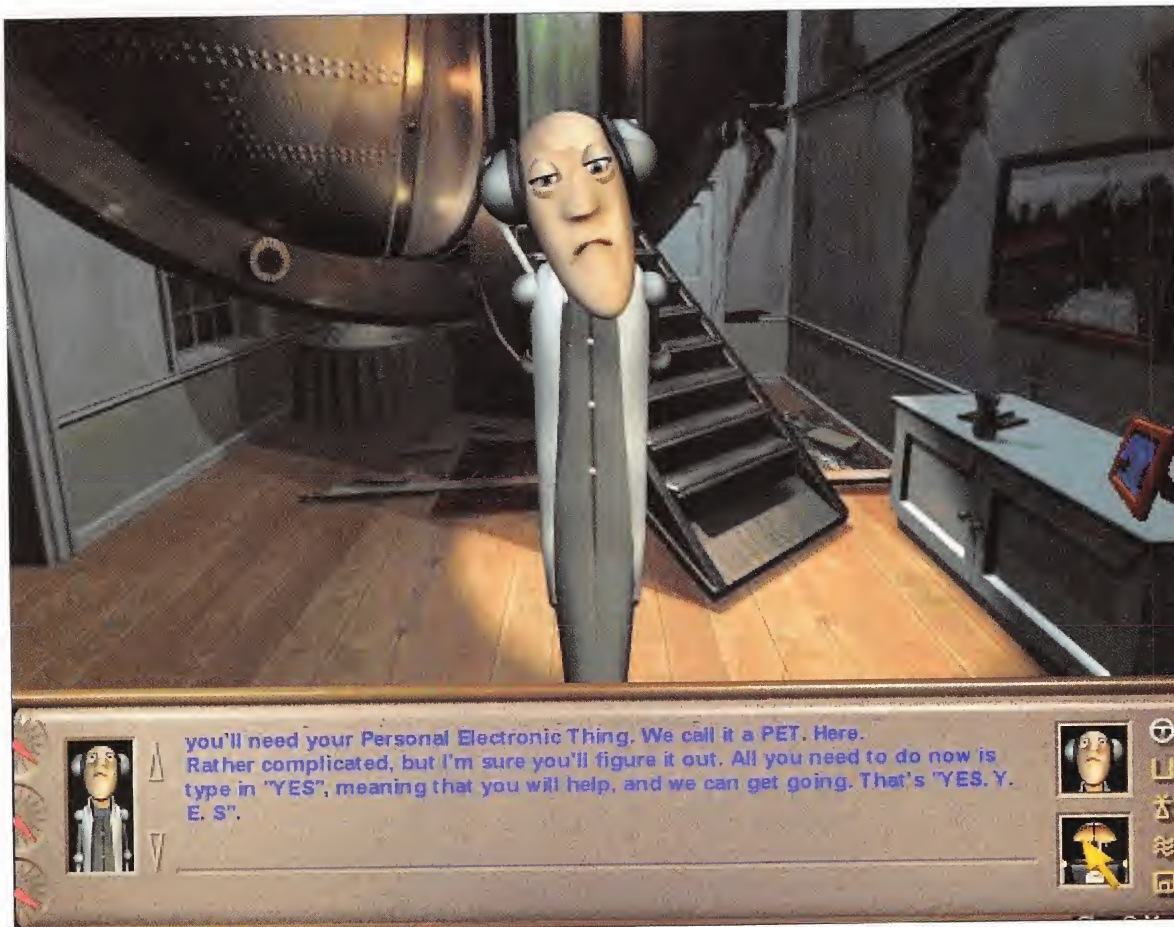


Old school interaction

Stepping up to what you presume to be the reception desk, you spy a bell and give it a ring. A delightful animation follows as the bell transforms into another bizarre, skinny robot. She informs you that you've been booked into a room in the Super Galactic Traveller section and that she couldn't possibly, under no circumstances whatsoever, grant you a ticket upgrade to Second Class. Conversation is entirely text-based. When you

start to speak with someone, a dialogue box replaces your inventory at the bottom of the screen. Here you can type in anything you feel like and try to elicit a useful or funny response from the other character. Ask them about the ship itself and they will give you some clues as to its problems. You can then follow these up with further questions or with someone else. The parser is quite sophisticated and certainly provides a different challenge to other graphic adven-





The, er, maitre'd bot, one of the most entertaining sections of the game



with snappy one-liners. I was expecting to have my ribs well and truly tickled. Instead, I got an anticlimactic bunch of strange characters and a few amusing jokes (okay, the maitre'd bot is funny, I'll grant you that). There are interesting and decidedly unusual puzzles to solve in several weird locations, but to me it felt too contrived - weirdness just for the sake of

it, if you like. In the end, I was left feeling a tad bored by the whole thing, though there were moments that shone.

David Wildgoose

tures around at the moment, in that you really have to think about what to say to people (or robots, in this case). I found it a refreshing change to the predictable keyword or menu conversation systems that all games seem to prefer nowadays. Having said that, many people, especially those who don't remember ye olde text adventures, will find it frustrating when many replies are mere variations on the (not at all) fondly remembered "I don't understand" theme.

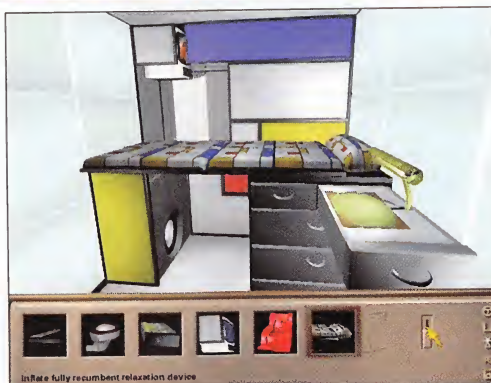
Starship Titanic is an unusual adventure in more ways than one. The scant plot presents you with the whole mystery right up front and then more or less abandons you to the puzzles themselves. It's a case of wandering around, investigating anything you find, interrogating anyone you find, and basically discovering exactly what does what.

Although, I guess, in this regard it is a little bit like Riven. The puzzles do come in all sorts of guises, however. Machines and gadgets are there to be operated and fiddled with, but there are plenty of clever object manipulations as well as many other types, often ridiculous, but usually logical. All in all, ST offers a decent balance of puzzles that will satisfy most adventure gamers.

Experienced adventures only need apply

I ought to mention that it's also a very challenging game. Some of the puzzles are extremely tough, although this isn't helped

by the lengthy trudging back and forth between rooms you're expected to do while working things out. My patience was sorely tested on occasions when I had to do something in one room, then spend about a minute walking somewhere else just to see if anything



had changed - then returning and trying again, etc. Sadly, despite its high difficulty, the game is actually quite short and will be over all too rapidly for most veteran adventurers.

For me, Starship Titanic is a bit of a disappointment. I was expecting to find a great game, full of surreal situations and littered

PLUS+



71%	
Category	Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Simon & Schuster
Price	\$TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now
For	The text-parser re-introduces the element of surprise into adventure game dialogue. Some amusing puzzles and jokes. Pretty hard, too.
Against	Generally mistakes oddness for humour. Should have been longer and with more things to do.
Need	Pentium, 16Mb RAM
Want	P133, 8xCD or 1.3Gb HD install.

UBIK

There's potential in any game based on the work of Philip K. Dick, and the most frustrating thing about UbiK is that it doesn't live up to it.

Philip K Dick's *UbiK*, to give you its full title, the novels and short stories of this revered American sci-fi author ought to provide a rich source of complex ideas for game developers to exploit. Dick was, after all, a writer famed more for his fantastic philosophical explorations of what Man's role might be in a future world, than for the literary quality of his prose. *UbiK*, like *Blade Runner* before it, has immense potential to be a cool game, but can *Cryo* equal Westwood's success?

It's all about money, as usual

By early next century, military war will have been rendered obsolete. Multinational economic superpowers, called Megacorps, now conduct wars purely over information. At the same time, the Hollis Corporation has been researching psychic powers that allow certain people to mentally manipulate matter and energy. Soon, these psychics are being snapped up by the Megacorps to infiltrate rival companies, steal data and even commit murder. In response, various

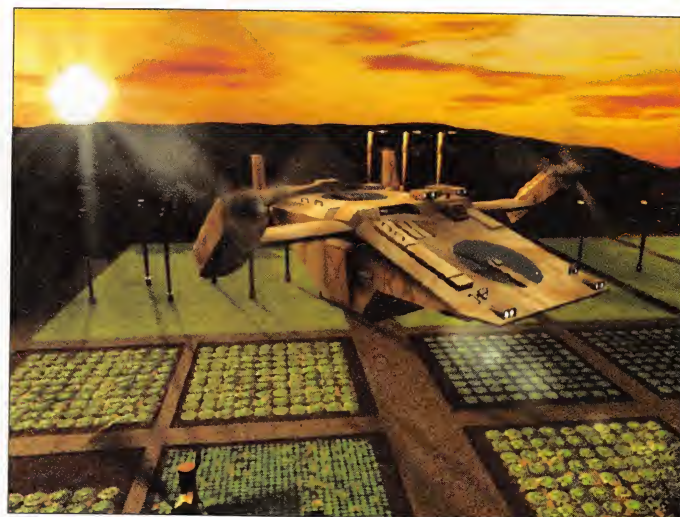
counter-espionage groups were formed to match the Hollis Corporation every step of the way. The so-called Psy Amendment has deemed some psychic powers legal, yet constant research means more lethal and destructive powers are developed all the time. The counter-espionage organisation you work for, Runciter Associates (that name should be familiar to *Blade Runner* fans), operates within the law, but may need to start



breaking it to contain the latest Hollis agents.

The game commences with you, as Joe Chip, squad leader at Runciter, hanging around your office. A short walk down the corridor later and you meet your boss. Cleverly, this is how you learn about each mission. After a mission you return to the Runciter building to recruit new agents,

upgrade weapons, armour and stuff, and chat with anyone you find wandering around. Something for which *Cryo* are to be congratulated is the development of a concurrent plot in these scenes alongside the missions themselves. They've really succeeded in creating a real world with *UbiK*, one that you explore related fragments of during the game. In addition, your agents gain experience and carry on over several missions (until they die or you realise they suck, basically), becoming genuine characters along the way. Overall, the structure of the game is excellent.



It's really quite annoying- this could have been so very good. But it's not. (right) Unfortunately the similarities to Blade Runner don't run as far as the gameplay



The every-genre

UbiK is an ambitious hybrid title. It has elements from virtually every genre you could mention. Adventure gamers will be familiar with the way you need to speak to plenty of characters (both between and during the missions) and examine and use all sorts of objects. These factors plus the allocation of experience points and equipment to purchase will please the RPG-ers. The regular gun-toting, grenade launching bloodshed ought to appeal to action gamers, while strategy fans might be also tempted by the tactical combat. Far more than any game I can think of (off the top of my head), *UbiK* is almost uncategorisable. I chose to call it "action/strategy" because it tends to lean slightly more towards this direction, but the label is still insufficient.

Sloppy interface

It's the worst control interface in the history of the world. Well, it's certainly the most idiotic, unintuitive, and fundamentally useless interface I've ever seen. Each room can be viewed from several different fixed camera angles and the problems are only beginning when the auto-switching doesn't show you everything you want to see. It's impossible to explain exactly how the cameras work (or, more accurately, don't work), but think of it as





like Alone In The Dark with five characters, manual control and far more complicated. Basically,

everything is so unfathomably awkward that you end up spending more time fighting the interface than the enemy.

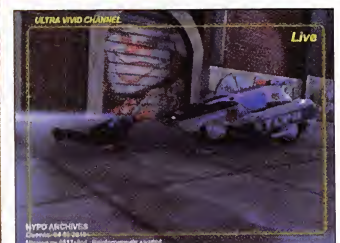
Actually, the entire game is played in real-time - with the exception of Joe's Booster Chip which allows time to be frozen for a limited period and for a limited number of uses - but you only realise how unutterably inadequate it truly is

during combat. Clearly the terrible interface contributes here, but so does the at times bizarre AI, the way your agents often ignore your commands, or run around in circles, or get stuck behind objects and even each other. The real-time engine, instead of heightening the excitement, serves only to give the impression of a lack of control. It may seem pointless to mention this, but surely a turn-based game would have worked better.

Mostly, though, it's the following question. Why wasn't someone there during the development process to tap the designers on the shoulder and say, "I'm sorry, guys, but this really isn't working, is it?". The end result is certainly still playable and enjoyable though, but oh how much better it could have been.

David Wildgoose

PLUS+



81%

Category Action/Strategy
Players 1
Publisher Cryo
Price \$TBA
Rating M
Available Now

For Terrific atmosphere created by the plot and lovely graphics. A great game in theory.

Against Horrific control means a terrible game in practice. Combat is a click-fest disaster.

Need P90, 16Mb RAM, 8xCD

Want P200, 32Mb RAM, 24xCD



SHADOW MASTER

Yet another 3D shooter tries hard to make its mark, but despite awe inspiring graphics, doesn't quite make it.

You know, there was a time when I thought I'd never get sick of any 3D shooter no matter how bad it was because they are the closest thing we've got to VR. All these new worlds to explore, new weapons to shoot, new monsters to shoot at, new graphics to look at - how could it ever go wrong? Then concepts like commercialism and exploitation became the norm in the games industry and what happened? Well, games developers suddenly had heaps more cash thrown at them so they could make better games, and the industry pushed hardware manufacturers to develop beefier hardware. It also meant that some companies saw games as an easy ticket to fantastic wealth, and that gamers were a bunch of morons who would buy anything thrown at them if it was a game in one of the 'hot' genres. Why am I ranting? Because Shadow Master is one of those games. It looks hot, sounds great, plays like a dog and is nothing we haven't seen before.

The story is that there's this bad-assed dude called the Overlord who has run out of natural resources on his planet, so he wants to grab them all from Earth. So, equipped with a Nissan Patrol with big guns, you have to destroy his minions and drive them from the 7 occupied planets in the free system, and then take out Mr Overlord him-

self. No points for plot. You start with basic weapons such as laser cannons and then augment your craft as you progress and add bigger weapons and targeting systems and the like to help you take out the nasties more efficiently.

Laser welding flowers

Shadow Master is probably the prettiest 3D shooter I've seen yet, barring the mighty Turok. The architecture is reminiscent of Tomb Raider and the game sports a similar engine but there are some quite large open areas as well as catacombs and buildings to explore. The enemies are well-designed and move very nicely, even though they remind me of the bugs in Starship. You take on spiders, mantii, dragons, triceratops and flower thingies with

laser guns, and each different world (7 of them in all) sports different types of baddies to show your new guns to.

They die impressively as well. There's no blood and guts, but most creatures you shoot blow up



into a million shards which scatter all over the place. The most visually impressive aspect is all eye-candy Psygnosis have thrown in.

Take all your standard driving/flight sim effects like lens flares, add fog, dynamic light-sourcing, transparency as well as cool lasers and very nicely done explosions and you've got an idea of what the game looks like.

Apparently the reason for these good looks is because the art in Shadow Master is inspired by British fantasy illustrator Rodney Matthews. You may not have heard of this guy, but he was an album-cover artists during the 70's and did stuff for bands like Thin Lizzy and Nazareth, as well as doing some sci-fi artwork for fantasy novels. So if you're into 70's panel van art this might just be the game for you. To the rest of us, it simply translates to a very atmospheric game as the guy who had a hand in the artistic direction has been doing this stuff for years, kinda like when H.R Geiger contributed to the artwork of Darkseed.

Big Booms

The sound effects fit right in with the graphics too. There's deep resounding booms when you blow something up, and each weapon has its own sound effect that matches the type of ammo used very well. Add to this a fast, hard-hitting soundtrack that suits the action perfectly and you have one sexy looking and sounding game.

The main reason I think Shadow Master suffers in the gameplay department is because it doesn't quite know what kind of game it is. Is it driving sim with guns? Is it a 1st person shoot-em-up? Is it a descent clone? It's hard to say, as the vehicle you're in behaves unpre-





Looking great & playing... well. Shadow Master lacks the finesse of the classic 1st person shooters

PLUS+

GAME OVERVIEW
THE ART OF RODNEY MATTHEWS
INTERVIEW WITH THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Check out some screenshots and a short video for the game in a 3D environment. And you can see the game in action.

Available January 1998 for PlayStation and PC CD-ROM.
 (Click here for PC Product Page)

Game Overview | The Art of Rodney Matthews | Interview with the Development Team | Keyboard/Mouse | Download/Share | Online Game | Site Map

www.psygnosis.com/shadowmaster/pages/home_new2.htm

70%

Category 3D Shooter
Players 1-8
Publisher Psygnosis
Price \$49.95
Rating M15+
Available Now

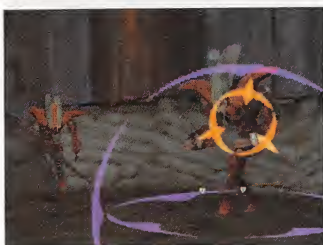
For Fantastic Graphics, truly special SPFX, great sound and a killer soundtrack.

Against Unoriginal concept. Lacklustre gameplay. Tries to be an arcade game but the craft is too difficult to control.

Need P120, 16MB RAM, 4 x CD, Direct3D compatible card

Want P166, 32MB RAM, 8 x CD, Win95, Joystick/Throttle

3D **DIRECT 3D COMPATIBLE CARD REQUIRED, 3DFX RECOMMENDED**



"Is 3Dfx, is good" - sadly those days are long gone. We're starting to see a lot of "Pretty as a model, but..." games now

dictably. It gets stuck in walls so you can't turn around and reverse quickly - by that time something nasty has crawled up behind you and chewed your ass off. It's a real pity because Psygnosis claim that they developed Shadow Master with the intent of it being a fast-paced arcade-style action game, but without a craft that is easy to control, this simply isn't possible.

Hinky controls

Add to the above confusion some controls that are not configurable and you have a game that is almost unplayable. Mouse control means mouse control only and keyboard is keyboard only. That's right, no mouse/key-

board combos. The keys are also fixed which means those of us with key preferences (ie, everyone) will not be able to adapt to the uncomfortable layout Psygnosis have imposed on us. It does however support 3-axis 4-button joysticks, so you can use joystick/throttle/rudder combos, which is the only way I could play the game.

If you've got a spare 50-odd bucks to throw at a game that will make you go "oooooh" at the graphics and sound, then by all means throw your moola at Shadow Master. Otherwise, be content with what you have and wait for the big games of '98 to arrive.

George Argy



BLACK DAHLIA

Wow! Two 'interactive movie' styled adventures in the one issue - and both of them are top drawer stuff! Black Dahlia is another that pushes the envelope for games of this genre.

Encompassing the exploits of a serial killer who neatly and painstakingly dismembers his victims, the horror of Nazism in Europe during World War II, and the recent formation of a government agency investigating anti-American activities, *Black Dahlia* promises an ambitious and very adult adventure. It partially succeeds, too. This is a mostly intriguing, always (with some exceptions, admittedly) entertaining mystery thriller, only weighed down at times by a severe linearity and some downright infuriating puzzles.

New Kid On The Block

Jim Pearson is the new kid at the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), a new U.S. intelligence service set up to flush out subversives aiding the German war effort. Taking over a case from your predecessor, Walter Pensky, a man with a singular obsession now recuperating from the "stress" of his job, Pearson is drawn into a bizarre world of murder, ancient Teutonic knights, and occult mystery. You play Pearson, unsurprisingly. In the most part, the gameplay consists of flitting from location to location (usually from one office to another, at least in the first half of the game) and chatting with people. *Black Dahlia*'s great strength is that it successfully fleshes out your role as an investigator. You quickly become immersed in this role, thinking and acting as if you yourself really were the detective. Slightly more in the way of narrative voice-over from your on screen alter ego and the transformation would have been complete.

Your view of each location is from a first-person perspective, yet during the numerous cut-scenes you see the whole of the action in an external, third-person view. Technically, *Black Dahlia* doesn't break any new ground. Compared to other similar adventures, the graphics and acting are more than adequate, though neither manage

enough to warrant any excited superlatives. The interface is a tad clumsy, but not unusual for this type of game. A mouse pointer floats about the place so you can click on various objects to use them or directions to move around. Holding down the left button enables you to turn full circle, while doing likewise on certain objects allows you to manipulate them in some way (opening or

logue, it makes no difference to the plot. Saying one thing instead of another doesn't send you off onto a whole new part of the game. All you do is click on each choice in any order, until you have exhausted the possibilities of the conversation. It's not interaction, it's mere prompting. Of course, there's nothing wrong with conversation in which you cannot choose what to say - plenty

of games have done it very well. What the method employed here in *Black Dahlia* means is that each conversation becomes fractured and, consequently, inconsistencies are apparent and the dynamic is lost. It would be far

more dramatically effective to play out the scenes in one go. Perhaps the only exception needed is when you show someone an object you're carrying. Actions such as this could easily be done during or after the conversation.

But maybe I'm inflating the problem here. *Black Dahlia* is



rotating things mostly). The latter can get a bit fiddly at times, but shouldn't cause too much concern.

Non-dynamic chatting

For an adventure which relies quite heavily and appropriately on character interaction, the conversations can seem noticeably stilted. The reason for this is that, although you are given choices throughout a dia-

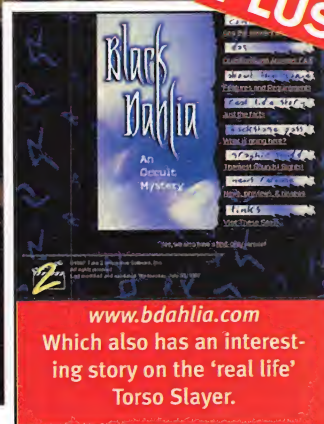


Location! Location! Location! Carefully crafted art sets a moody ambience. And by the looks of *Black Dahlia*, the artists have taken a LOT of time getting that 1940's Art Deco architecture just right



The hall of many doors - the adventure game equivalent to the RPG catacombs.

PLUS+



www.bdahlia.com
Which also has an interesting story on the 'real life' Torso Slayer.



simply operating within the accepted norms of the genre. It's probably unfair to single it out for criticism when I could do the same for so many other titles. Conversation does play a large role in the game - characters regularly have interesting and credible things to say and, importantly, these dialogues advance the plot well. I guess it's obvious that I'm scratching around for significant faults with the game.

The curse of linearity

Actually, the only genuine problem with the game is that it is way too linear. Now, there are two kinds of linearity. One, plot linearity - where there is only one narrative path to follow. Most games are like this, so it's

usually tolerated (even ignored) as long as the second type of linearity is absent. This second type - puzzle linearity - is worse. Here, you not only follow the one plot strand, but also negotiate the puzzles one at a time along the way. Translated to gameplay terms, it means you cannot move onto another puzzle when you get stuck on the present one. This is what makes adventures frustrating experiences for many gamers. Black Dahlia, then, will frustrate many gamers, exasperating you at every turn, constantly reminding you of its limitations. Non-adventure gamers be warned.

Impressively, there is a healthy amount of exceedingly clever puzzles. The best are the ones which heighten the feeling you have of doing real detective work. Crack the code in Act One and you will truly believe that the badge Pearson is carrying in his trenchcoat pocket is your own. Refreshing to see, too, most of the "logic" puzzles (jigs-

saws, button or gear sequences, etc) carefully integrated into the story, and thus, for this reason, becoming (much) less of chore to solve. At other times, however, the designers have become a little lazy. Solutions to a number of these puzzles can only be found through mere trial-and-error, thanks to the absence of clues placed within the game. The virtually incomprehensible water wheel gadget in Act Three is a prime example. If the rest of the game hadn't put me in such an agreeable mood, then who knows what reckless actions I may have taken when I stumbled upon this diabolical piece of design.

Regardless of the linearity (and some of those puzzles), Black Dahlia is a fine adventure. The atmosphere of 1940s America is evoked superbly and the plot sustains pace and fascination until the end. Jim Pearson is a worthy challenger to Tex Murphy in the trenchcoat-wearing stakes.

David Wildgoose

82%

Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Take2 Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating M15
Available Now

For Excellent atmosphere and story. Plenty of ingenious "detective-like" puzzles. Reasonable acting and graphics.

Against Searing linearity and some sloppy puzzles will lead to frustration.

Need P90, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P120, 8xCD



REDLINE RACER

More bike games please... Anybody! Redline Racer is a fine arcade screamer, following nicely after the brilliant Moto Racer. We want more!

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the contest for the world motorcycle sim game crown! In the left corner we have the reigning champion of Motorcycle sims, the current king of the genre, still looking great and fighting fit, it's Mooootooo Raceeeeeer! <crowd goes wild>. And in the right corner, wearing the prettiest pair of Ubisoft trunks ever seen in a ring, the new kid on the block, the contender to the throne, Redliiiiine Racerrrr! <crowd goes wild again>.

The bell rings, and it's Redline who lands the first punch. It's a scorching right, chock full of brilliantly crisp and clear motorcycles, clearly defined and fluid rider animations, an astounding level of detail in the scenery, and a richness of colour that will make your jaw drop. But Moto Racer deflects the punch a little, blocking with its' own very nice graphics, and then counters with a heavy blow full of fast, action packed gameplay that blends arcade style fun with a great driving model.

And Redline Racer is starting to look shaky! That last blow seems to have really hurt it, it doesn't seem to have anything to counter it. But wait! There's reserves of strength in Redline that we missed at first inspection. Yes folks, Redline is getting back up and he looks angry too! He slams Moto with some interesting tracks, and then whacks in a hook that contains great crash scenes, and smashes Moto with a killer blow that has a variety of bikes to choose from, and a driving model that once you get a little more used to it, works fairly well.

Not so smart AI

This could be an upset folks! Moto Racer, the reigning champion of racing sims is down on the canvas and not looking very well either. No, wait, here comes Moto Racer. He takes a standing 8 count, and then launches himself at Redline, landing punches at will with the 'AI combination' punch.

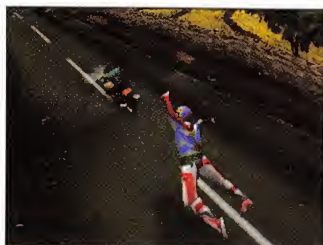
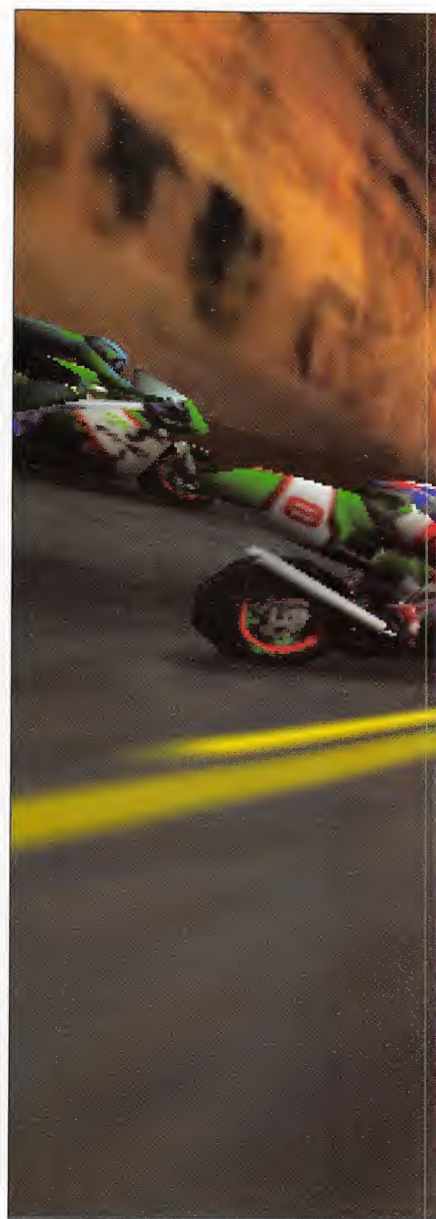


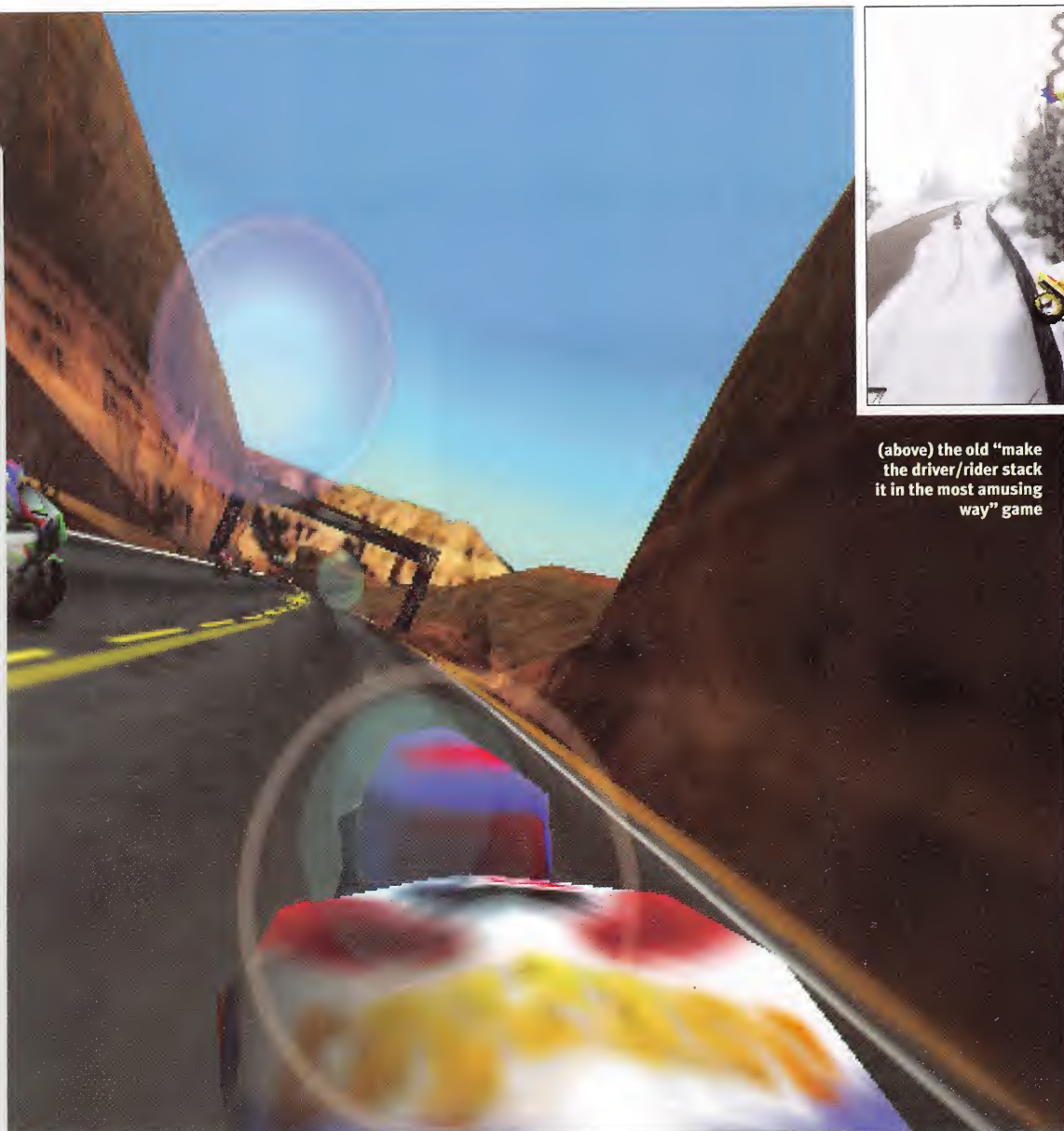
First comes the left, containing AI drivers that know their stuff. Then a crashing right hand, smashing AI riders that act and react according to your movements right into Redline's face. And then the coup de grace, a perfect right hand hook that puts Redline down to the canvas, a devastating blow containing AI that really feels like intelligent, almost human opposition. But Redline manages to struggle back up off the canvas, standing really only by virtue of its magnificent graphics, and that's the way it ends. The judges verdict? A split decision...the crown will be shared between the two. Moto Racer will hold the more serious sim-style crown while Redline takes the fun arcade style console crown! <crowd riots>.

(top) I can fly! I can fly! I can... uh oh
(above) High powered, slick tyred superbikes racing on sand? hmm...

Arcade consoleness

It was a very close battle though. And all silliness aside, Redline Racer is a good game, just don't expect it to be like GP2 on two wheels. RR is most definitely leaning more towards the arcade side of things than the serious sim side. For starters, all the basic arcade style tenets are in place. There's only a fairly small number of tracks with the harder tracks becoming 'unlocked' as you progress in the game, and there's also a couple of secret tracks too, of course. Then there's the bikes, which have the same premise attached - you only get to play with





(above) the old "make the driver/rider stack it in the most amusing way" game



PLUS+



78%

Category Motorcycle racing
Players 1-8 (IPX, TCP/IP, direct connection, serial)
Publisher Ubisoft
Price \$TBA
Rating G8+
Available Now

For Some of the best graphics ever seen in an action game. Cool crashes, good multiplayer support, and a variety of different bikes to choose from.

Against It tries to meld arcade style tracks and dynamics with a fairly realistic driving model, which is serviceable, but not all that great. The AI is terrible, more of a road hazard than a contestant.

Need 4Mb 3D accelerator, P166, 8Mb RAM

Want P200, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx



NATIVE 3DFX SUPPORT AS WELL AS D3D



The graphics are truly amazing, but the AI and the driving model let the game down a bit

there's no late breaking passing manoeuvres at corners, all they do is go around the track in a set formula where it's up to you to better them. Then there's the finicky driving model, which is fairly accurate in some

respects though quite silly in others. A couple of the courses are partially or fully on sand, and seeing as you're riding street bikes, you'd expect them to handle a little differently here wouldn't you? Nope. Not at all. And the tracks are all fairly thin too, making passing manoeuvres extremely hard (especially seeing as the AI tends to group together). The crashes are magnificent however, with you flying all over the place in gruesome displays of bodily harm, but at the harder levels one crash is all it takes for the race to be over for

you, necessitating a restart, and let me tell you, this can become very annoying very quickly.

Good looks overcomes all

Redline Racer does look absolutely fantastic though, and as with Moto racer, multiplayer is where the game is at its best (mostly because the AI isn't there). When multiplaying RR, you can ignore the annoyingly correct driving model (for this type of game), and you actually get some exciting racing too. I think I'd still prefer Moto Racer, however, for both single and multiplayer games, but Redline Racer does come very close (once you get used to its quirks), and for what it is, it's a fun game, provided you have the patience to restart each race quite a lot, or have a LAN at home and friends to play with.

Gareth Jones

the better ones after you've mastered the initial crappy ones, and again there's also the requisite silly secret bikes including vehicles and characters from other Ubisoft games. And then comes the AI....well, it's just not quite up to scratch. The opposition doesn't even pretend to know that you're on the track and will happily crash straight into you if you get in its way. Also, the AI isn't really an opposition for you so much as it is a hazard. The aim is to not crash into them rather than to out ride them - they don't challenge you,



LAST BRONX

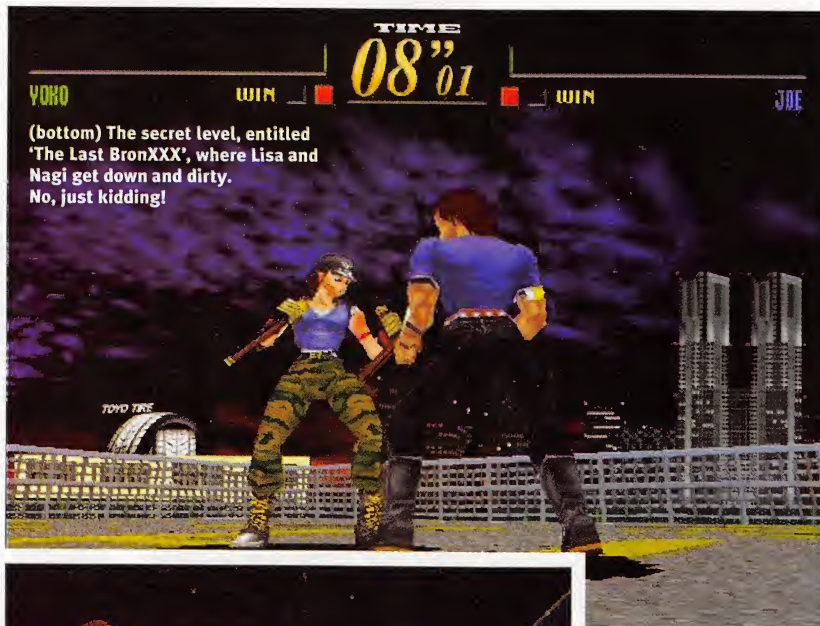
Manga , biff, 3D virtual backstreet boys, leather jackets, attitude.

Last Bronx is a 3D fighting game along the lines of Virtua Fighter or Tekken, with cartoonish manga characters. From the cinematic cartoon intro (with subtitles), you are assaulted by a bubbly mix of kung-fu movie clichés. The retiring gang leader training an irresponsible successor, the young girl taking pity on the street urchin she just pounded nearly to death, and the wired Akira guy with bright red skin and cybernetic goggles surgically attached. All your standard run-of-the-mill Japanese story-line, fitting somewhere in the mid-morning TV guide between "Here's Humphrey" and the Midday show with Kerri Ann.

It's not all that bad, the graphical video is of a very high standard, and the character development is not completely predictable (although rapid!).

Brilliant animation

It's your usual one-on-one bashfest in a 3D ring, yet with 2D movement towards and away from the opponent, with hovering camera angles



and action replays. With acceleration it runs in high res. very satisfactorily, and the characters' animation is undeniably good. For instance when the player swings their quarterstaff, a visual trail of lesser images echo the weapon's path, showing what the hell happened over those 0.2 seconds of combat.

There is a fairly standard spread of characters, from the

small and crafty to the massive and destructive, not to mention the skateboarding, quarterstaff twirling punk.

A good whupping

That spread is consistent, in that the characters use a variety of weapons in their quest to whup each other. The

chunky big guy has a big wooden mallet, while the nimble girl uses sais, a bit like a sharp cake fork, and the whole spectrum in between. The best thing about this is the huge variety of moves, about thirty for each character, which creates replay value with real

longevity. You could play this for years and still potentially have new moves to discover. These include standard attacks, combos, "special" moves and a selection of throws to disable your nemesis.

It's a harmless, bloodless fighting game with excellent intros and replay value. Well worth checking out.

Hendry Saunders



70%

Category Beat Em Up
Players 1-2 (LAN, Serial Link or Modem)
Publisher Jaspac/Sega
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Great movies, good animation and big attack variety.

Against It's another 3D fighting game, in a storm of them we are currently experiencing. Nothing dazzlingly spectacular about it to separate it from its peers.

Need Win95, Pentium 133Mhz, 16Mb RAM, 35MB Hard Drive Space, Sound Blaster 16 or compatible sound card.

Want Win95, Pentium 166Mhz, 32MB RAM, 60MB Hard Drive Space.



ACROSS THE BOARD SUPPORT THROUGH D3D

PLUS+



FRONT PAGE SPORTS SKI RACING

I got you to hold my hand, I got you to undeerstaaand.
I got you to kiss goodnight,
I've got you to hold me tight.
I got you babeee... <whump>

Our Front Page Sports Ski Racing with Picabo Street. Picabo who? You may well ask; blonde, toothy, all-American gal, Ms Street (first name pronounced, amusingly, 'Peek-a-boo') was apparently one of the stars of the Winter Olympics from earlier this year. Whether this was due to her scintillating performances on the slopes of Nagano or merely the result of her ridiculous name, is a situation I'm not qualified to comment on. I have a sneaking suspicion it might be the latter, however.

Upon receiving the game to review, I was initially sceptical as to how skiing would translate to the computer. Previously I'd experienced snowboarding on my Playstation and ski-jumping on my Commodore 64 with only moderate success, and so I wasn't anticipating much more from this title. Thus, while FPSSR does marginally exceed expectations, it's no great praise when those expectations aren't high to begin with.

Four different events! All much the same!

Gratifyingly, there are four different events in which to compete, each promising the thrill of speeding down a mountain very quickly indeed. Yet any early enthusiasm soon dissipates when you realise that the four events are more or less identical. After completing the Slalom (weaving

between coloured flags), the Giant Slalom (like the Slalom but longer), the Downhill (like the Slalom but longer and faster) and the Super G (like the Downhill but not as long nor fast), you'll be desperate to switch to something (anything!) else for some much-needed variety. Perhaps the inclusion of a ski-jump or luge, although not appropriate to the Ski Racing title (nor within Picabo's area of expertise), should have been considered.

It's all very well striving to create a painstakingly realistic skiing simulation, but if it doesn't work as a game then that effort counts for nought. FPSSR is fundamentally flawed by virtue of its very nature. Snow is white and so much of the game's graphics are obviously white, too. But this means that the position and direction of the gullies and slopes running across the mountain are very difficult to judge. One moment you're heading between the flags, the next you find yourself veering wide simply because you couldn't see which way the slope was heading. Another basic problem is the structure of events. Skiing is a solo sport in which the main competition is against the clock. Predictably this makes for a lonely and boring game.

If you like skiing....

On a positive note, the minimal amount of polygons used in the graphics means that a decent framerate is achievable on a lowly Pentium. With the addition of a 3DFX card, anyone will be capa-



63%

Category Sport
Players 1-Multi (Hotseat)
Publisher Sierra
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Succeeds in its task of making a decent ski sim...

Against ...but, in doing so, creates a limited and very dull game.

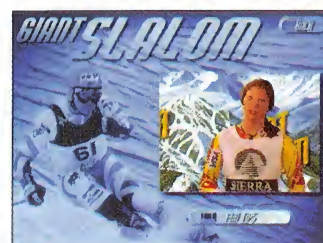
Need P90, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P133, 3Dfx

3D SUPPORTS 3DFX OUT OF THE BOX. RENDITION CARDS NEED A PATCH



A patch for Internet, modem and network play will be available shortly from www.sierra.com



**WORST
r.t.s.
EVER!**

Final Conflict rides on the premise of another unstoppable, maniacal Alien race that's storming the Universe, nuking everything in sight, until...they ran into us Humans. We, funnily enough, don't take abuse from arrogant Aliens, in fact we have some Nuking of our own in mind. So begins another intergalactic struggle for utter genocide of the opposition, etc, etc. etc.

Aaaaaargh!

The graphics, unfortunately really are totally abysmal, both in terms of landscape and characters, also in animation, composi-

tion and interaction. The sounds are a “cyber” revision of Warcraft’s humourous-at-the-time character voices which spurt overacted enthusiasm or irritating hardcore kind of “Roger that, my Master” responses.

The units really are almost completely derivative: the basic “peon” units, build buildings, and have a marginal combat ability, while trucks do all the shipping work. Minor difference there. Apart from your generic two forms of resource (mined metal and mined diamonds), and food which is generated by con-



ing their health until they die. Viruses can be removed by the same unit on the friendly team 'erasing' it from their ally. Also "rewiring" convert enemies, causing them to launch friendly fire at each other.

The units are almost all robots.

and fire Star-Wars style laser "bolts", with a clichéd "Bzow!" noise.

The bigger warriors just fire bigger bolts which travel further and do more damage.

There was, once, probably on the drawing board, some potential for original ideas to work in this game. Unfortunately original ideas mean nothing when housed in a boring, lacklustre shunk of a title which doesn't even seem completed(!). When laying down a building site, your designator is a plain, opaque, ugly blue box with no cosmetic adjustments or transparency or anything, also the fog of war has nasty blocky edges with errant blue chunks sticking out, for no apparent reason! If these aspects were intentional, then there was some serious lack of comparison with current, popular games before release.

There is a whopping total of 21 missions to dribble your way

through, and in the unlikely event you stayed awake, and actually finished all 2 hours worth of gameplay, then “free updates” are available on the website, as well as an upcoming (yawn) patch for multiplayer.

Oh, and if you buy this you get 50 free hours with America Online, well it's paid for itself already I hear you yelling. Er. no.

Hendry Saunders

20%

Category	Real time Strategy
Players	1
Publisher	Sound Source
Price	\$TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

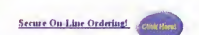
For It's really easy, and accessible to total lamers.

Against Atrocious graphics, derivative concepts and gameplay, insulting, pre-school level difficulty.

Need Pentium, Win '95 ,
8MB RAM, 2 x CD

Want P100, 4 x CD, 2MB
VRAM, 16 Mb RAM.

PLUS⁺



**You can get “free updates”,
or in other words; “shocking
bug fixes and shameless
post-release completion of
in-game elements”**
www.risoftsystems.com

SEMPER FI

Other people might want to be like Mike, but if you want to be like Stormin' Norman then Semper Fi is for you.

This game presents war as it would have appeared to Norman Schwarzkopf. "Move Platoon 3179 North to engage with enemy battalion 4026"

You pronounce, waving a pointer across the whiteboard map in a lazy fashion, before sitting back down in your comfortable armchair and finishing the really important business; your heavily sugared Latte with cream. A polite little round of applause arises from your cohorts and minders, who then tell someone else to get on the radio and tell another person to tell the actual soldiers to go out and kill people. Thus, having masterminded the brilliant coup to obliterate the enemy, you decide to have a nip of brandy and a round of Golf with the Secretary of State.

Rudimentary turn based combat

The perspective for this game is so large, it might as well be from orbit. The map is broken down into hexagons, which are several kilometres across. You control mass armies as a single icon, moving through and occupying the hexagons in a strategic manner in order to gain the advantage. Which basically involves sending them headlong into the occupied hexagons, having a bit of biff, and either driving the bandits out or getting toasted. Not much middle ground, really. It's also turn-based, so problems like units moving out of range while you are shooting at them just don't happen. Upon finishing a mission, you're given the in-depth statistics. The kills usually rise into the hundreds, although the most action you've seen is little icons blinking and popping.

PLUS+

SEMPER FI

The United States Marine Corps: the cutting edge of contemporary rapid reaction forces. Trained and equipped to go anywhere in the world in a moment's notice and to fulfill missions from language barriers to amphibious assaults, from humanitarian assistance to extended combat operations. There is no more versatile fighting machine in any modern nation's arsenal than the United States Marine.

www.imagicgames.com



Makes it a lot easier to understand how the term collateral damage came about...

with vengeful memories of past events, but they're a bit much for current generations without a chip on their shoulder.

Summary: A dream come true for wannabe Admirals, it's absolutely detached control of faceless, cannon fodder troops.

Hendry Saunders



In each move, your possible range of movement is projected in all directions and indicated by the blue coloured hexes. Once your unit army has moved, if you have any remaining pep you can fire at nearby enemies, if they are within your field of fire (the red hexagons). There are a whole truck-full of variables that affect the outcome though, including unit morale, fatigue, Line of Sight (LOS), terrain roughness and elevation, etc. Of course there are also Armour units and Choppers, as well as Command units and Transports.

Pulling off the 'Fire Base Puller'

Things like moving in on an enemy hexagon designating a "close assault", which yields more results than firing from an adjacent hexagon, and deployable smoke grenades which impede incoming fire are nice touches, but not always obvious methods to employ. Naturally the manual goes into great detail on how to stack the odds in your favour, but I still found no feelings of a daring, risky assault on a bunker or brilliant, crushing manoeuvres that you often find in other strategy games. In breaking it down to turn-level components, the senses of action, defeat or victory are all extremely diluted, and taste very bland when served. So, all this takes place within historical, and contemporary scenarios which give you specific units, enemies and objectives. Some of the missions include encounters named things like "The Road to Sarajevo", "Remember Tehran" and 'Fire Base Puller' (which sounds particularly appropriate). They're all very Log-Cabin-esque American kinda "help out the Joes" missions, which is fair enough considering it's a simulation of the US Marine Corps. The derogatory descriptions of the middle Eastern forces are probably targeting patriotic characters

50%

Category War Strategy
Players 1-Multi (Hotseat)
Publisher Sierra
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Allows unlimited time between moves, very strategic and carefully considered gameplay.

Against Very slow pace, also painfully iconic graphics. Similar to the combat from Civilisation, but scaled down to pitched battles and predefined scenarios.

Need Win95, P90, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD

Want Generals hat, Army boots, little foil-wrapped chocolate ration packs



SAFECRACKER

GT Interactive, the giants of the games industry show once again that they really know what makes a quality game. Onya GT!

Plot lines don't come any more tenuous or threadbare than this. After applying for a position as Security Development Chief with a company called Crabb & Sons, you turn up for an interview at their office only to be told that you must successfully complete a rather odd test. Mr Crabb then ushers you into the deep recesses of the building to a room containing an immense wall-safe, inside of which is your job contract. Informing you that the combination can be found by piecing together clues from the dizzying selection of other safes scattered around the building, he asks you to return a few days later and attempt to collect your contract. Yay! It's the world's first Quality Assurance Simulator.

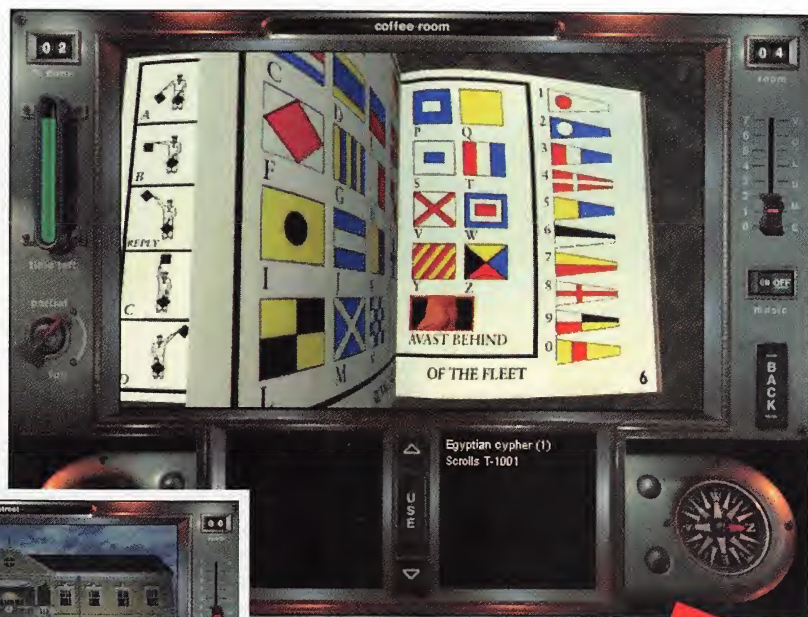
So you arrive at Crabb & Sons one night and discover that the main gate has been padlocked. On the padlock itself is a combination to be solved - obviously part of the test. Trouble is, you're given no prior clue at all as to what the combination might be. Several hours of fruitless wandering between the six or so empty locations along the street and tedious random fiddling with the lock later, you finally find a walkthrough on the Internet and "solve" the "puzzle". Yes, people, Safecracker is one of THOSE games.

Convoluted and pointless puzzles

Once inside the building, your aim is to work out how to open all the safes you can find. Each one has a unique design and the solutions may require either careful study of various papers and diagrams that have been conveniently left lying around in the offices or just pure luck. Or another quick glance at that useful walkthrough. I'm talking arcane, convoluted logic puzzles here. Puzzles that delude themselves into thinking that witless, haphazard concoctions of gadgetry will suffice for genuine mystery and intrigue. This just won't do.

The game is presented from a

familiar first-person point-and-click view. Each scene has been nicely, but rather plainly, rendered in 3D. Detracting severely from the feeling of immersion, however, is that this view only occupies a small portion of the screen (about a third at the most). Linking animations between scenes (as in recent titles like *Atlantis* and *Obsidian*) are absent, although it



Um, wow. Crack the combination of a safe by deciphering some semaphore flags. Yeah, cerebral, intuitive, interesting and fun gaming this is not.

face aside, there was already one flaw serious enough to cripple the game's chances. That is, any atmosphere was lost with the stifling and pointless basic premise.

Safecracking is a theme with terrific potential for a gripping adventure, but it doesn't even try.

What about infiltrat-

ing high-security buildings and stealing top secret documents or breaking into country estates and nicking priceless jewellery? Instead you are allowed to be in the house (you've been invited there, for chrissakes!) and you're there to get yourself a job!! Incredulity just about sums up my reaction to this. Where's the suspense? Honestly, has there ever been a duller, more banal reason to play a game?

What's the point?

But Safecracker was really a lost cause right from the beginning. Dismal puzzles, unspectacular graphics and painful inter-

Safecracker, then. An adventure game for the terminally unadventurous.

David Wildgoose

PLUS+

Complete safe
Safecracker by Daydream

This is not a walkthrough of every room in the game, only the solutions to the safes and the contents of them. Its listed by room-number but you may not be able to go in that order when you play.

Color Codes:
Name of safe
Solution to safe
Contents of safe

Plans over the house can be found in room 1, Reception. May come in handy.

That lifesaving walkthrough can be found at
www.the-spoiler.com/ADVENTURE/Daydream.software/safecracker.1.html

49%

Category Puzzle/Adventure
Players 1
Publisher GT Interactive
Price STBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Decent graphics.

Against A drab, lifeless, pointless game

Need 486/66, 16Mb RAM

Want P90, 32Mb RAM, 8xCD

THE GOLF PRO

"Looks like he's hit the tree, Jim..."



the mouse control is that you can pick the size of your swing, and the speed at which the club meets the ball in one complete motion. For instance, a half-swing with a fast ball strike is pretty good for lifting the ball out of a sandtrap, but won't carry it too far. This kind of shot is dead easy with the analog control.

Of course the usual nasal American com-

mentary presides throughout the game, with an impressive variety of stuff to say, and clever assemblages of words and events to compose a summary, for instance "Well, an (eight) par hole, let's see if you can match that (bogey) you made on the last one" are very cool indeed. They "oooh" and "aaah" frequently, and occasionally break into stuff like: "I just can't believe it! No way!"

GolfCam

The virtual courses are very nice to look at, the trees are flat polygons, but captured and implemented in a way that brings out almost photorealistic quality. The buildings, ground and streams, etc are totally polygonal though. You can't change the view once it's set, to get a different perspective, but that's okay, because in real golf you can't do that very well, and nobody really bothers anyway. All you have in real life is a high res view from one perspective, and the game provides that just fine. You can pick the weather conditions, including wind speed and you do have a simultaneous overhead view in a window, showing the orientation of your shot, which you can easily adjust in the 3D screen simply by clicking on the ground, or in the map for a

National is the brainchild of Gary Player, who is your virtual coach within the game.

A warm'n'friendly game

Gary Player is a gentle teacher, showing you the ropes with a calm voice and wise disposition, giving astute hints and encouragement as you thrash around in an unwieldy fashion during your first lesson. The first thing he teaches you is a sense of rhythm and timing in your swing, something really only possible with an analog interface, i.e. your mouse. You're free to have as many practice swings before you tee off, or to abort a swing if you stuff it up halfway. This is implemented in a very simple way, which is that a complete swing and hit require depression of the mouse button throughout. If you release before making contact with the ball, the shot is aborted, and you can try again. There are sixteen interactive lessons from Gary to guide you on your way to golfing stardom.

Your golfing character is not 3D, rather a series of angles which the camera angle aligns appropriately with the shot's perspective. They have a lot of frames, adequately covering the whole swing, which play back and forth as you swing the shot, in realtime. The cool thing about

calculated approach. Of course, you can pick and club you want for any shot with a simple click on the club icon.

You can customize your golfer, with right or left handedness, shirt colour and sex. You can't import Quake2 models to have running around the greens, but perhaps that's just as well. The small number you have to work with are completely adequate in a golfy sort of way.

Hendry Saunders

The Golf Pro takes a fairly analog approach to modelling the gentleman's game, aiming for intuitive controls and simplified interface.

First thing you run into is the "mouse calibration" process, whereby the maximum speed you can achieve on your mouse in all directions is measured and tested. This cool little box stretches as you whiz your mouse around, then the game scale adjusts to that reading. We're not sure if this is entirely necessary, but the developers claim it makes the gameplay more consistent, as the game does rely heavily on very precise mouse motion.

So, calibration out of the way, you're free to flog your way through two famous courses modelled down to the nth degree. One of them, St Meillon was designed by Jack Nicklaus, and the other, Hilton Head



87%

Category Golf Sim
Players 1 (so far)
Publisher Empire
Price STBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Very intuitive interface, almost relaxing to play. Nice visuals are very pleasing to the eye.

Against No funky 3D stuff, chopercam walk-throughs, adjustable camera angles or big range of courses to play at. Also the lack of a "championship" function where you can compete with the Pros is strangely absent.

Need Pentium, 8Mb RAM, 2xCD

Want P133, 32MbRAM, 8xCD

BABYLON 5 Arcade Series Entertainment Utility

Sound Source Interactive

STATISTICALLY, 99% OF GAMERS ARE BABYLON 5 FREAKS - IT SEEMS. GO NUTS KIDS, HERE'S THE INTERACTIVE MULTIMEDIA CD.

A few issues back, our resident freaky boy Ashton Mills (he of the black spray-painted case) made mention of his desktop theme for B5, and gained quite a deal of reader interest about where they could get their hands on their own version. Well, if you're one of those kinds of people, then this is just what you're after. Let's start with the basics; the desktop theme. Upon installation you are given the option of starting their 'personal desktop'. The personal desktop is a nifty little utility that randomises the wallpaper, sound events and cursors for your desktop each time you restart Windows, ensuring variety in your desktop look, which is nice...mostly. Sure, some of the sounds might be very annoying, and you can't change them or turn them off because they're actually part of a program that runs separately to the Win '95 themes program, but mostly it's a nice feature.

Screen saver spoiler

However, the screen saver program that is installed by default is a bit of a doozy. It's got some nice FMV sequences, some decent pictures and data on the crew but, once again, it's way ahead of where we are at the moment. So, sadly, after running the screen saver to test it out, I unfortunately happened upon some information on how things turn out in the near future, which was very annoying...but I



Lot's of fairly cool sounds, icons and pictures make up for the shameless attempts at exploitation elsewhere on the CD

feel a whole lot better now that I haven't ruined it for you too :)

Even so, as nice as the random B5 desktop theme is, you'll probably find yourself wanting to create and customise your very own theme. And if you do, you'll find plenty to choose from on this CD - from cursors to wallpaper to sounds and so on. There's enough variety to keep you happy for quite a while, and this alone almost makes it worth purchasing the CD if you're one of those people who lock the doors, take

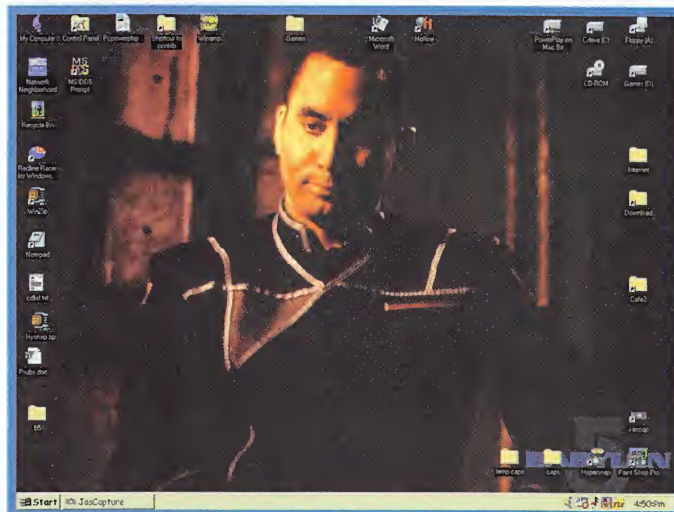
the phone off the hook, and chloroform that noisy cat from next door each Thursday night at around 10:45.

Shameless marketing

However, there are more than a couple of negative points for this CD. Firstly,

worst of it, big mention is made about the arcade game that's included, although in reality 'game' is probably not an appropriate title. It's a dismal disappointment, and I'm not even going to explain what it is other than to say it's like Space Invaders except about a hundred times worse.

Other than these rather dismal attempts at 'value adding' to the CD, the desktop themes are comprehensive and good. There are



there's the promotional packaging. SSI are trying to make us believe that the first 100,000 units they're selling are 'limited editions', and you get some crappy 'lenticular' art on the box cover of a Vorlon ship entering through a jump gate. Wowie Zowie. And that's not all either, you also get a Certificate of Authenticity and your very own serial number too! Is it just me, or is this taking memorabilia just a little too far? But that's not the

around 25 different pics for your wallpaper (most of them are quite nice, and not just of the ships either, many of them are character close-ups), and there's plenty of sound bites, cursors, icons and so on as well. Although you can probably download most of them from the net, it's handy having them all on one CD, and for that the 'arcade series entertainment utility' is a worth purchase for Bab 5 fans.

Gareth Jones





STAR TREK: The Game show

Sound Source Interactive Win 3.1/Win '95/Mac

STAR TREKIN', ACROSS YOUR PC CD. IT'S MULTIMEDIA, JIM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT, NOT AS WE KNOW IT...

Trekkies are a strange breed of people. They are the fans that tend to take fandom on to the next level, into pure and unadulterated worship. For some reason, Star Trek seems to be a series that can't be watched casually, it's a show that must be watched with an eye for detail, with the viewer carefully examining every aspect of the characters actions, the ships, and the environment around them for the most minute derivation from what they consider to be right and correct. And any detail out of place is almost instantly pounced upon, with exclamations of righteous indignation and immediate and outraged phone calls or emails to fellow trekkies. I know, because I lived with a hard core trekkie for two years or so, one that even occasionally enjoyed dressing up as her favourite character and going to those silly conventions. Scary, huh?

Star Freak

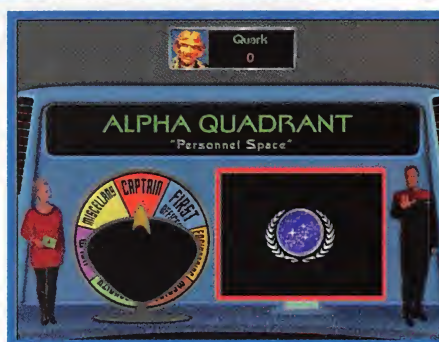
But, as you may have guessed, I don't count myself among the legions of Star Trek fans (Baby though, now there's a Sci-fi series!), but I feel confident in saying that for any Trekkie this would be a marvellous experience, having passed this around the office to our resident Trekkies and gained their stamp of approval, as well as having enjoyed it myself. It's essentially like Sale Of The Century, except not for money, without prizes, and instead of the smarminess of Glenny Ridge you get the acerbic wit of 'Q' and his sidekick who is also (for some reason that Trekkies are sure to understand) called 'Q', but is like the barbie doll of the game show. But all this is just window dressing, really (albeit entertaining and fun window dressing), it's the questions that you will want to know about. And they're suitably hard,



designed for an audience that knows their stuff. The questions span all of the various Trek incarnations, from TOS to TNG, along with DS9, Voyager, and all the movies too. Mostly, they take the form of multiple choice, and as with most trivia games they're best when played along with your friends rather than just by yourself.

With free Bill Shatner doll

It's not all just voice overs and a list of answers to choose from though, there's also a smattering of video clips from which you



have to divine answers from, although these did seem to take more the form of watching what was contained in the clips (i.e. How many people did Kirk say he was responsible for in the clip) rather than Trek trivia per se. Even so, when it was given to some of the Trekkies in the office, it became quite hard to get the disk back after a while. The familiar cry of 'just one more question' was oft heard, and as far as I'm concerned this

In the future... aliens will look human, but with different coloured plasticine on their mugs

was an emphatic recommendation for the game. And even if I did find Q very annoying after a short while (he tends to talk a lot, but I'm assured that this is all within the normal parameters of his character), I did find myself enjoying the quiz, so if you've always thought that you were the one that held the most knowledge about the Trek universe amongst your Trekkie pals, now could be the time to put the argument to rest once and for all and confirm your place at the very pinnacle of Trek trivia knowledge.

Gareth Jones



ULTIMA COLLECTION

Origin

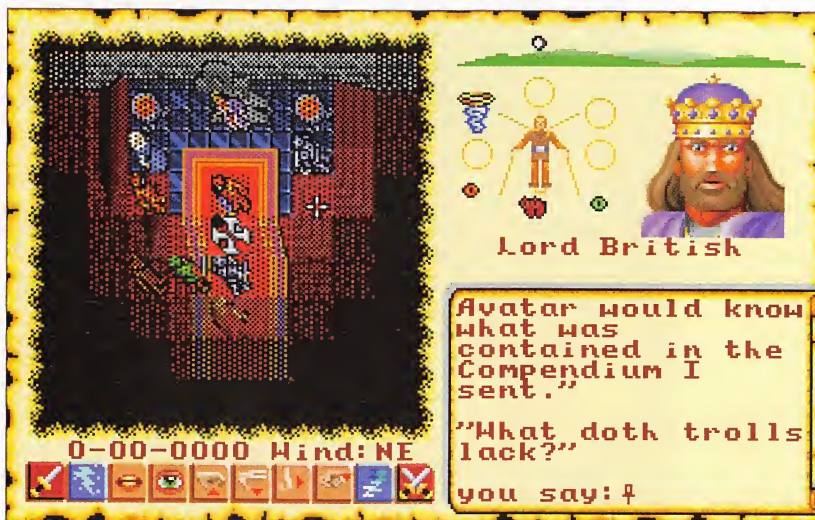
WELL, AT LEAST IT'S SOMETHING TO KEEP YOU GOING WHILE WE CONTINUE TO WAIT FOR A LOCALISED SERVER FOR ULTIMA ONLINE. HERE'S WHERE THE ULTIMA PHENOMENON ALL STARTED, AND HOW IT DEVELOPED

Deploying the final tactic of their plan to ensure that everyone in the world owns a copy of at least one Ultima, Origin have just released their fourth compilation of Ultima games. This new compilation, featuring Ultimas 1-8 as well as the pre-Ultima Richard Garriott creation, Akalabeth, is called the Ultima Collection.

So is this the ultimate Ultima compilation? Sadly, no. There are at least four complete Ultima titles absent from the package. The two Ultima Chronicles (Martial Dreams and Savage Empire) and both Underworlds are missing, sorely depleting - but not crippling - the value of the collection. Especially disappointing is the lack of either Chronicles game, not only because they both used the Ultima IV or V game engine (I can't remember which exactly) and so would be just as playable as those are today, but they are such an oft-neglected (yet again, it seems) part of Ultima history that failing to include them in this collection is more than a missed opportunity, it's a terrible injustice.

Want a proper manual? Buy one!

More galling still is the surprisingly shoddy presentation. Inside the box you'll find the games' CD accompanied only by a slim pamphlet laughably termed an "Atlas" and a flimsy 48-page manual-cum-installation guide. The latter contains little more than keyboard commands and spell ingredients for each game. Complete manuals can be found in text files on the CD, but this is a less than desirable situation. Predictably, the back cover of the "manual" is an ad for Origin's Official Guide to the Ultima Collection (includ-



Sure, the graphics aren't very impressive by today's standards - but what adventuring there is to be had!

non-linear structure - that to this day has so infrequently been bettered. Ultima VII was the same (bar the loss of turn-based combat in favour of real-time), only more so. In fact, UVII can probably lay claim to



V, will run under Win95 in a DOS box. With Ultimas VI, VII and VIII, though, prepare yourself for the inevitable nightmare of conventional memory requirements, arcane memory managers and boot disks. 'Moslo' is thankfully installed with every game to slow down your Pentium to the speed of a 386. That one concession is about the only thing Origin got right.

being the most interactive game ever. You could, if you wished, journey to the mountains, find a mine, collect some pieces of iron ore, visit the blacksmith in town and, using the forge, bellows and tongs available there, construct your very own sword from scratch! For me, UVII is the greatest RPG ever made.

As for the remaining six games? I hadn't played UVI until now, but first impressions indicate that it is of the same calibre as UIV, UV and UVII. Ultimas II and III are fairly basic, yet still moderately entertaining for the Ultima and/or RPG veteran. However, even they would be hard pressed to find much worthwhile in either the very simple UI or hilariously primitive Akalabeth. UVIII represented a departure from the Ultima tradition, introducing as it does numerous action elements to the displeasure of hard-core role-players. While it is a good game, it sits a little uneasily with the rest of the series.

All in all, despite the packaging deficiencies, the astonishing value for money of this compilation is more than enough to warrant its immediate purchase.

David Wildgoose



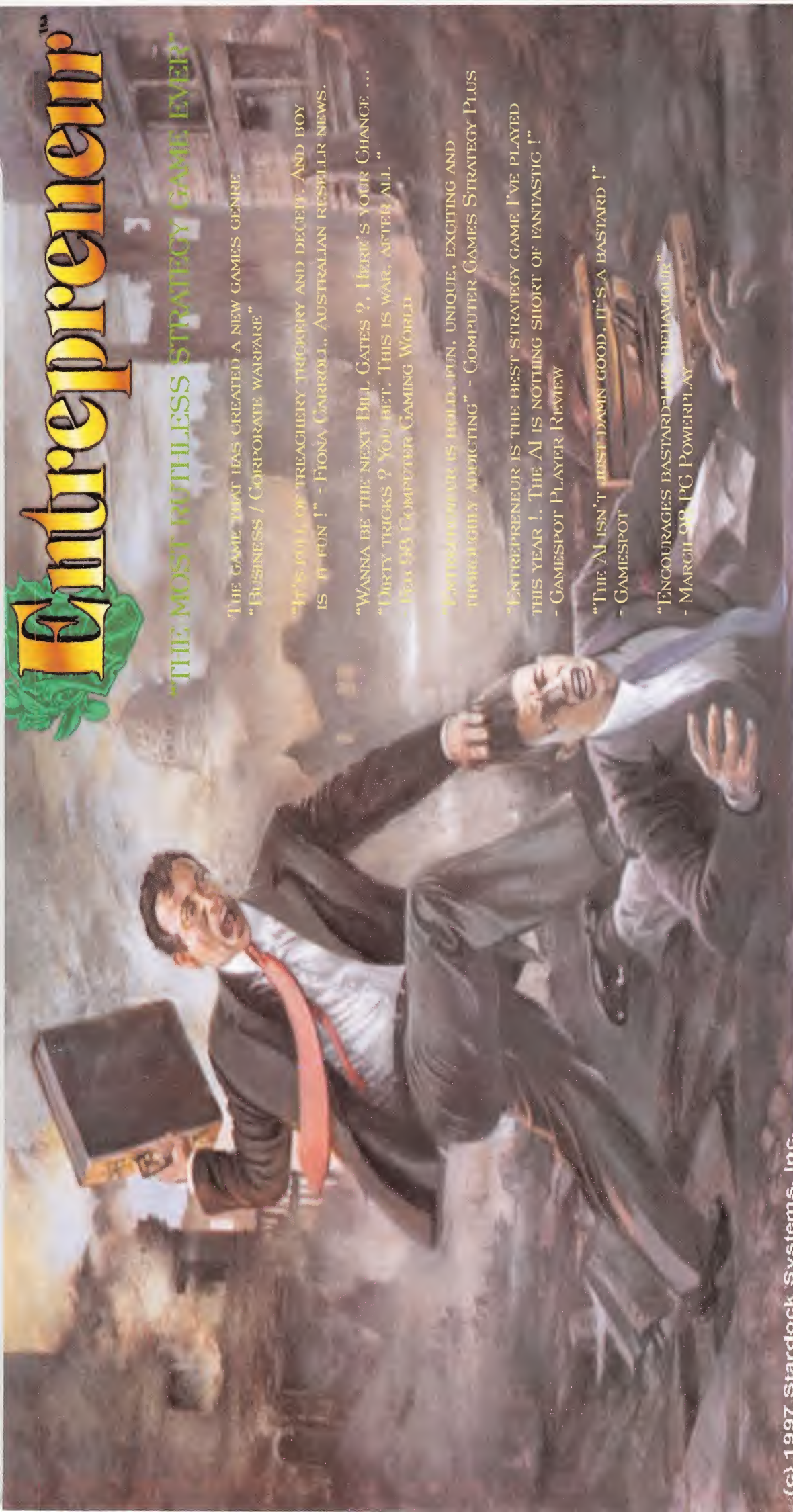
ing walkthroughs, hints and tips, maps, and spells), selling at the "bargain" price of \$US20.

None of the games have been altered to work with today's computers either. Thankfully, the earlier games, from Ultima I to



Retro gaming at its finest

Other than the games themselves, that is. Even the problems outlined above cannot detract from the sheer quality of at least half of the nine games available here. Ultimas IV, V and VII still reside highly in my list of all time favourite games and could never be considered as anything less than classic, and indeed landmark, titles. For their time, UIV and UV offered gameplay of unparalleled depth - replete with unique conversations with hundreds of NPCs, epic and compelling stories, uncomplicated yet still strategic turn-based combat and, significantly, a decidedly



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- GAMESPOT PLAYER REVIEW

"THE AI ISN'T JUST DAMN GOOD, IT'S A BASTARD !"
- GAMESPOT

"ENCOURAGES BASTARD-LIKE BEHAVIOUR"
- MARCH 98 PC POWERPLAY



Voodoo 2 POWERTESTED

Woo hoo!

Voodoo 2 has come to save us all! It's not often that promises are kept, but everything we expected of the new king has been delivered with style. Behold...

VOODOO 2 PERFORMANCE

Now this is just obscene, it's absurd and surely this is unheard of in the computer industry. A product that lives up to expectation! A company promised double the speed and actually delivered. Surely it can't be! But it is! Yes, the Voodoo 2 has arrived and has actually lived up to all the hype. It actually delivers twice the performance and certainly makes the 20% speed increases Intel keeps on coming out with seem all rather insignificant.

The Voodoo 2 is fast, really fast! As expected it's much faster than every other accelerator currently available, but by far, one of the most fascinating factors is where that speed has gone too. What's really making the Voodoo 2 tick, and why such a spectacular performance increase?

Well, I'm glad you asked because here at PowerPlay, we've used our Powerbench suite of utilities to pinpoint exactly what's happening in the heart of the Voodoo 2 and where all that speed has gone to. As were we,

we think you will be quite surprised with the results.

Note: These percentages are available from a function of the Powerbench software. The percentages are actually based on a comparison of the algorithmic limits of the test suite vs the card being tested. These numbers were made available so reviewers could see any glaring faults or outstanding abilities of a particular 3D accelerator.

TESTING

The first test is a real time manipulation of a rendered scene. This on its own is an extremely comprehensive test as it uses all the functions of the accelerator to render. With the Voodoo 2, most surprisingly, it was exactly 202% faster.

The next test in the suite specifically focuses on fill rate, or how fast the accelerator can "paint" a polygon. The Voodoo 2, and hold on to your hats, is 330% faster than its predecessor.

Things become a little grim for some from here on in though. Do you own a Pentium 200 MMX? Probably thought it was pretty snazzy right? Well, The Voodoo 2 is only 12% faster in polygon manipulations on a 200 MMX. This obviously didn't gel too well with us here in the office, as a 12% increase on polygon activity is absolutely pitiful. So, we decided to throw the Voodoo 2 into a Pentium 2 266 with its bus speed at 75. Suddenly, the polygon count skyrocketed giving a result that was 204% faster than a Voodoo 1. Ouch!

LOOK! BIG NUMBERS!

What a quandary, if you own a Pentium 2 now, your bus speed sucks, but with a Voodoo 2 your 3D applications will scream. If however, you were planning on upgrading to a Voodoo 2, to get best performance out of it, you also need to purchase a Pentium 2. Sure, you can take advantage of the faster bus speed of the

BENCHTEST: CREATIVE VODOO 2 & DIAMOND MONSTER 2

Chipset: 3Dfx Voodoo 2 featuring:

- Perspective correct texture mapping
- Bi-linear and tri-linear texture filtering
- Z-buffer (16bpp, integer and floating point)
- Level of detail (LOD) MIP mapping
- Sub-pixel and sub-textel correction
- Bump Mapping
- Gouraud shading and texture modulation
- Full 24-bit rendering, dithered to 16-bit RGB
- Full bi-linear blending of palletized and compressed textures
- Anti-aliasing
- Depth buffering (16-bit linear, 22-bit effective)
- Alpha blending

Per-pixel special effects: fog, transparency, translucency, texture compositing, morphing, animation

- Linear frame buffer access
- Single-pass tri-linear filtering
- Single-pass dual textures per pixel

RRP \$ Creative 8MB: \$499, 12MB: \$699

Diamond 8MB: \$549, 12MB: \$749

Software Included: TBA

Creative Powerbench 3D (12Mb): **123.723**

Creative Powerbench 3D (12Mb on a Pentium 2 266): **130.264**

Diamond Powerbench 3D (8Mb): **124.848**

new motherboards, but suddenly, upgrading to a Voodoo 2 has become a lot more expensive.

Moving right along from that gem of information however, things continue to get better. Vertex intersection, another form of 3D calculation handled on board has been accelerated by 324%. A combined fill, texture and polygon test is 264% faster and a combined polygon/gouraud test was 71% faster (likely to be even faster on a P2).

Finally, the most significant speed increase occurred within the realms of polaric mathematics, or the processing and manipulation of spherical objects. Here, the Voodoo 2 was 352% faster than a Voodoo 1.

THE VODOO2'S SECRET TRICKS

Basically, the assumptions we can make from the results of this test is that 3Dfx have concentrat-

ed on filling polygons both very quickly and with advanced texturing techniques and leaving the handling of polygon generation to the System Processor.

To further answer the question of where all the new found speed of the Voodoo 2 is coming from you need look no further than the clock speed of the card. Where the Voodoo 1 ran at a speed of 50Mhz, the Voodoo 2 runs at a speed of 90Mhz (over-clock-able to 95Mhz.) At 90Mhz, in pure hardware terms, it's nearly twice as fast as a Voodoo 1. Of course in the cases where the card has performed well over 3 times as fast as a Voodoo 1 some absolute credit has to go to 3Dfx, they've really managed to push 3D accelerator technology to the limit.

PLAYING WITH IT

Overall, the Voodoo 2 represents a monumental achievement in both the refinement and limits

of 3D acceleration. Let's face it, nothing this year is going to come close to the Voodoo 2 and 3Dfx have regained their strangle hold on the 3D accelerated market.

Believe it or not, it even gets better though. Raw speed and power aren't the only things on offer in the Voodoo 2. There's also the newly refined colour palette and colour rendering. Despite the incredible ability of the Voodoo 1, it wasn't hard to complain about a certain washed out look that 3Dfx games had (something that the Power VR capitalised on). Another glaring problem was that in a number of games, transparent textures often had ugly black borders around them.

Well, these are the most striking fixes apparent in the Voodoo 2. Colour is suddenly vibrant and imaging has a much cleaner look to it. Mip mapping has also been refined and seems to blend the different sized textures in the distance to perfection. Well, this was the case in Activision's Battlezone. On a Standard 3Dfx, the ground texturing was blurry and you could discern the different mip mapped layers. On a Voodoo 2 however, the moons surface had a rather realistic look to it. Likewise, proper mip mapping can also create the impression that something has a much greater depth than it really does.

Of even greater joy was to run Wipeout 2097. Note: For those of you wondering why we always drag out Wipeout 2097 for real world testing, it's because it's the only game that actually incorporates just about every feature you would want in a 3D test. It allows for scalable tracks and a resolution up to 1024 x 768. It also features translucent texturing in the form of jet streams.

Anyway, firing up Wipeout 2097 was beyond an amazing experience. The colours were so very different. Those of you that actually have the edition of PowerPlay where I reviewed Wipeout 2097 will remember that I described the image quality like you were playing the game through a layer of volcanic ash. Little did we realise at the time that it was the 3Dfx not colouring the scene correctly. On the Voodoo 2, the colours came alive

and most importantly, transparent textures that had previously displayed with a black border around them were now integrating into the scene perfectly.

RAW SPEED

As for the speed, ok, I've harped on about how fast the card is, but at 800 x 600 Wipeout 2097 was ridiculous. In order to run the test, I deliberately enabled a special function of the Voodoo 2 that told it not to sync to the Vertical refresh rate of the monitor, allowing the game to run as fast as it wanted. At 800 x 600, Wipeout 2097 was so mind numbingly fast on the Voodoo 2 that everything was just a blur. Other racers overtook at a ridiculous speed and the game was absolutely, totally unplayable. It was spectacularly amazing.

Note: Please remember that I disabled vertical syncing in order to observe the results of the test. Obviously, buying a super fast card to play games on, that are unplayable because of the speed does make it superfluous. By enabling vertical syncing, the card and game would sync to the Hz rate of your monitor and therefore run at the games intended speed and not be unplayably fast.

12MB VS 8MB

As we had the good fortune of having 2 Voodoo 2's to benchtest, one a Creative 12Mb, the other a Diamond 8Mb, you may be rather surprised to notice that the Diamond Voodoo 2 with less memory actually beat the 12Mb Creative. The Powerbench difference is rather negligible though and for all intents and purposes it's worth noting that the Creative and Diamond card perform the same. The memory issue however is an interesting one.

Whether you have 12Mb or 8Mb, the maximum resolution for a Voodoo 2 is still 800 x 600. This is because 4Mb is used for z buffer (allowing for a max res of 800 x 600) and all remaining memory is used for texturing. A 12Mb Voodoo 2 will simply allow for more textures to be cached on card, or for larger textures to be stored. The current 3D bench tests that we employ aren't going to pick up on large textures



With brighter colours and better transparency, Wipeout 2097 looks better than it ever has

because they're designed to calculate polygon and fill rate speed.

The application where you will see a speed increase with more texture memory is in Quake 2. Though still, the speed increase isn't going to occur as you play the game, but instead, as the textures become cached. Running timedemo, for example, will give a lower fps, the first time round. Once all the textures are cached however, the 12Mb Voodoo will suddenly show a much higher frame rate. If you can afford a 12Mb card, then you might as well go for it, however, an 8Mb card isn't too limiting a choice.

VOODOO 2 X 2

SLI is a function of the Voodoo 2's that allows 2 cards in a PC to work in tandem to render a scene. While one card renders all the odd horizontal scan lines (1,3,5,7,9,11 etc), the second Voodoo 2 renders all the even horizontal scan lines (2,4,6,8,10,12 etc). 2 8Mb cards will actually give you 8Mb of z buffer memory (allowing for 1024 x 768) and another 8Mb of texture memory.

NATIVE SUPPORT

Believe it or not, even after all that has been discussed about the Voodoo 2 in this article, there is still so much more to talk about that space and lack of software support does not permit.

The Voodoo 2 also has a host of new functions that it can use to make scenes more realistic, such as bump mapping and advanced fog effects. But we're not going to be able to appreciate

this until there's software to support it. Currently, the only title to support the Voodoo 2 is Heavy Gear (Voodoo 2 edition) that should be shipping with the boxed Diamond Monster 2. You can be sure that 3D Tech News will be on the lookout for everything and anything that supports the Voodoo 2, and of course will keep you posted with screenshots and commentaries on the latest Voodoo 2 software.

It's apparent already though, even without seeing its advanced capabilities that the Voodoo 2 is a clear winner in the 3D arena outshining everything else there is. Like the Voodoo 1, the price of a Voodoo 2 will continue to fall and quite simply, everyone will have one. This is going to be another amazing year of gaming with titles appearing to support the Voodoo 2 that we all never thought could be possible. Thankfully, at this very moment, you don't need to rush out and buy one, but soon the "Next Generation" of software will be arriving and if you're Voodoo 2 impaired, life just won't be worth living.

Next month...

Voodoo 2's a big story and we've got a lot to tell. Be sure to check out next month's 3D Tech News for more Voodoo 2 testing, new cards from other vendors and, hopefully, SLI mode...

Rendition 2200 vs. Riva

**It's not all
Voodoo 2, we've
done the deed
with two exciting
new combo
cards, both
boasting video-in
and offering
excellent
all-round
performance.**

HERCULES

PERFORMANCE

Before even discussing this card, or the merits of the V2200 chipset, the sheer amount of trouble that we had to go through to get it working properly has to be mentioned. You may notice that for "Ease of Installation" that we gave it "Nightmarish". This is definitely the most accurate description we can use as getting the V2200 to function with an air of stability is enough to give the calmest person constant, sweaty, sleep depriving nightmares.

Clearly the fault lays in the drivers, and who is responsible for them is a debatable issue. Hercules, who are distributing this card do supply their Power utilities and tools, however, the actual drivers to control the card do appear to be Rendition reference drivers. As we know from our wonderful past experiences with Rendition the trouble we faced isn't that surprising.

To give a little history and to take some pressure off Hercules, this isn't the first time we've had driver problems with the V2X00

range. In January, we reviewed the Diamond S220 V2100, the first second generation Rendition that we had and the initial drivers acted the same way the V2200 drivers acted. That is to say, they crashed the machines regularly ever 5 minutes. To get the news out as fast as possible, here at PowerPlay, we often receive cards with Beta, or even Alpha drivers, so we have to be careful about what we report. At the time, some new Diamond drivers on their Website actually alleviated the crashing problem. Knowing Diamond for their wonderful drivers from past history, we let it slide with the 2100 knowing that the functioning drivers would be shipped with the release.

There is no such happy ending for the Hercules V2200. The same symptom of constant crashing was occurring and it's a most disconcerting and frustrating situation. In the end, the only solution was to totally erase Windows 95, reinstall it and then apply the V2200 drivers. Only then did stability come to the machine. For those of you out there that regularly reinstall your Windows, this isn't a problem. Deleting and reinstalling Windows however, to some is simply technically out of their league, to others, it's facing the reality that they will lose numerous entries in ICQ, as well as having to reinstall a vast number of games and utilities again. I for instance, wanted to take the 2200 from the lab to play with it at home, however I have not the time to delete and reinstall my Windows in order to do so.

To close the topic on the whole installation issue, it is worth mentioning that on the test machine, a Riva 128, Adrenaline Voodoo Rush and Graphics Blaster Extreme were all installed to try and replicate the problem. They all ran error free.

BENCHTEST: HERCULES THRILLER 3D

Chipset: Rendition V2200 featuring:

- 230MHz DAC, Hardware accelerated video playback with bi-linear filtering and software MPEG player.
- True color up to 1152x864/75 Hz.
- Hardware accelerated DirectX support for Windows 95.
- Composite Video-in(PAL, NTSC)
- Video-out(PAL,NTSC) connectors for S-VIDEO and composite Video.
- VESA compliant stereoscopic connector for 3D glasses.

RRP \$512

Software Included: TBA

Powerbench 2D: 53.12

Powerbench 3D: 58.9866

Powerbench Overall: 56.0533

Ease of Installation: Nightmarish

It was only when the V2200 was placed back in did the machine suffer from indignant show stopping crashes again. If everyone else can get it right in this situation, why can't

Rendition/Hercules (Note:

Hercules claimed they had no problems with the V2200 and could not reproduce the problems we had)?

VIDEO-IN

With that out of the way, it was with joy that we received the V2200. TV in/TV out, DVD and 3D acceleration as fast as a 3Dfx, now that's damn nice. First up being tested was the video-in, which was absolutely superb. The nicest facet of the V2200 is that it's video-in utilises ADC (analogue to digital conversion). This is an important factor because it means that the 2200 can display a fully functional and moving video image at a virtually infinite resolution. That is to say, if the video card can do the res, 1600 x 1200 for example, then the video will play. This is an important consideration because we also had the Canopus Total 3D (Riva chipset with video-in) to compare with the 2200 and it had some limitations in this area.

Besides infinite resolution, ADC means that video capture is as easy as pressing the Print Screen Key. Or, if you using something fancier such as Hypersnap, you can take multiple screenshots with just a hot key. This is an idyllic situation if you wanted to take screenshots

from a home video, or that favourite scene from a movie. The utility and simplicity this allows for these operations makes the input actually worthwhile for the V2200, and not just a novelty.

The driver for the ADC is also fully Windows 95 compliant and actually installs as a device in system properties. What this means is that Video conferencing across the net is as easy as plugging a video camera into the video-in connector and talking away. Due to the ADC being in hardware, capture quality was fast and of a high standard for conferencing.

VIDEO-OUT

Video-out worked well and allowed for Super VHS to be output. This is a good thing as it makes for a higher resolution image through capable TV's and a more stable and less interfered with picture. It's hard to say whether TV out will become popular for the home user, it's most likely included as a handy feature for OEM's who are designing PC's to interface with the household and act more like a Video recorder or game console than a conventional computing device.

3D ACCELERATION

3D acceleration for the 2200 was also faster than the 2100 and overall on par with the 3Dfx. The V2X00 range is slightly unusual in it's ability to accelerate Direct X applications. With hardware designed to actually blit Direct X pixels a certain way, these appli-

cations absolutely fly on the 2200 (even faster than a 3Dfx). As could be expected though, the V2200 is no match for the new Voodoo 2's, so it's outdated already. It is fair to say that the V2200 is as fast as a 3Dfx overall. With some Direct X applications (such as Wipeout 2097) performing incredibly, while other applications such as Quake 2 that don't use Direct X run slower, it balances the 2200 out.

DVD is about the only other function left on the 2200 that we didn't have an opportunity to try. Lacking the completed drivers for the 2200, MPEG 2 playback couldn't be reported on.

THE FUTURE PC

There is no doubt that the future of video cards lies not in a marriage of 2D and 3D as is currently being employed by a number of video card manufacturers, but by a split in functionality. The future PC will incorporate a primary video card that excels in all forms of 2D functionality such as video-in, movie playback and video conferencing etc. The secondary video card will then take on added functionality such as 3D processing, 3D image output (LCD shutter glasses) and even possibly the VR headset will make a comeback. The V2200 (all installation problems aside) is most definitely on the right track. Watching TV on your PC while working is an absolute buzz, however until the driver problems are sorted out it's still early days.

SUMMARY

In summary, despite some driver problems that seem to be able to be alleviated with a fresh install of Windows 95, the V2200 is an admirable performer. It's 2D performance is on par with other high end cards and if you didn't already have a 3D accelerator, its 3D is fast and functional until that Voodoo 2 can be purchased. It's video-in capabilities are extraordinarily good, allowing for video conferencing and video capture and when the DVD drivers are released, will allow for the watching of these new high quality movies (the quality of which we will report on when able). The V2200 would not be a foolish investment at all.

CANOPUS

PERFORMANCE

Unlike the V2200, things were off to a good start, installation of the Canopus Total 3D was delightfully simple. No need to download new drivers, it worked first time and the included utilities were even useful. The Total 3D was looking like a winner.

The reason we're comparing the V2200 and the Total 3D is because they both share video-in capabilities, which is a desirable function of a primary video card. The uses are literally endless, from video conferencing to watching the TV whilst surfing the Net, or even for the making of multimedia presentations. Video-in is a desirable new function to be incorporated onto a video card, at the moment though, there is no fully incorporated solution, and like a strange curse, trade-offs have to be made somewhere.

In the case of the 2200, it's the less than capable driver-support that is a potential turn-off, the Riva 128 video solution however has its own problems. The greatest problem it has is that it can't display video at a resolution higher than 1024 x 768. Now, if you own a 15" monitor, this isn't a problem at all, but at least 2 of us at PowerPlay have 20" monitors at home, and we expect the more enthusiastic of the readers would as well.

ULTRA-FAST 3D

In the Riva's favor is its added functionality in the areas of 2D and 3D. In 2D, it's slightly faster than the V2200 but nothing that's amazingly discernible in Windows. On the side of 3D however, it is the fastest (non Voodoo 2) card there is. With a 3D Powerbench of 79.5231 it sits firmly between a Voodoo and Voodoo 2 in terms of speed. It's not as fast as a Voodoo 2, but faster than a 3Dfx.

This isn't to say the Riva is the best 3D choice though. As we reported before, in order for the Riva to achieve this speed, there are certain trade-offs that are made. Mainly in the area of colour. Image quality on the Riva always seem to look dirty. This is because it uses dithered

BENCHTEST: CANOPUS TOTAL 3D 128V

Featuring the NVIDIA RIVA 128, with 128-bit graphics engine and 230 MHz integrated RAMDAC.

- S-Video and composite video-in connectors
- S-Video and composite TV-out connectors
- Programmable flash BIOS
- TV-Out (NTSC/PAL)
- Simultaneous TV/monitor display
- 640x480 and 800x600 desktop resolutions
- Auto-detection and boot-up to TV (no monitor required)
- Video-In (NTSC/PAL)
- Video capture at resolutions up to 320x240, up to 30 fps
- Still image capture at resolutions up to 1500x1125 (NTSC only)
- Live video display through hardware overlay Video for Windows driver

RRP \$512

Software Included:

- Kai's Power Goo SE (fun photo manipulation)
- Simply3D 2 LE (3D modeling and animation)
- Picture Publisher 7 LE (photo editing)
- VRCreator/Learning Edition (VRML world creation)
- Direct3D game demo sampler (G-Police, Wipeout XL, Shipwreckers)
- Trial versions of video applications, including video conferencing, video editing, and streaming video for the Internet.

Powerbench 2D: 55.6833

Powerbench 3D: 79.5231

Powerbench Overall: 67.6032

Ease of Installation: Easy

colors to substitute "true colour". Dithering is the process of using scattered black pixels to create a darker colour. If you had a white square for example, and wanted to make it grey without using another colour in the palette, you would place a black pixel in every 3rd pixel in the square for example. Up close, it looks little more than a white square with black dots, but from a distance, the black dots merge with the white and give the appearance of grey.

This is obviously a shortcut put in place on the Rivas' so that it can use less data or a smaller palette to describe a scene. It's something that a person really needs to see for themselves though. With the number of video cards I go through and as a "big fan" of colour in general, I find the dithering distracting and annoying. Less finicky others however may not be bothered by this at all and enjoy the incredible 3D speed of the card.

SUMMARY

Ultimately, the Total 3D is a video card we would recommend for use within a PC. If you have a 15" monitor, then the video-in limitations are negligible and the overall performance of the card is great. It's not a V2200 beater though, particularly since the 2200 has the added functionality of on board DVD. On the other hand, the Total 3D is stable and functioning now.

As for us, we're still watching and waiting for the perfect primary video card. Only time will tell if the V2200 will get its driver problems sorted out and be that card. The Riva has a lot to offer, but is let down by "issues". Whether these issues are perceived as semantic or substantial is of personal opinion though. Ultimately, we're still waiting to see if another contender will come along and take the title.

VIEWSONIC

G810, P775 & P813 Monitors

We've said it a few times before, but we're big believers in positive reinforcement here at PowerPlay, so we'd like to take this opportunity to make sure you're all aware of the importance of a big, hefty, sexy monitor for all your gaming needs. Once you've made the move upwards from the standard 15 inchers you'll never look back, and if you aspire to greatness and get yourself a 20 or 21 inch, then you will have reached the heights of excellence. Simply put - it don't bet much better than 21 inches.

Viewsonic would happily place themselves in the middle range

G810

Viewsonic divide their monitor range into three areas, the E2 series for 'education and entertainment', the Graphics series for desktop publishing and the like, and the Professional series for CAD/CAM people...and of course, hard core gamers. For those on a tight budget however, the G810 should prove to be a very attractive option. A full 21 inches of gaming glory, with some pretty impressive specs, ARAG coating (Anti-reflection, Anti-glare), and a very attractive price (comparatively) to boot.

Viewable area: 20"

Dot pitch: 0.25 mm

Flat Screen: Yes

BNC Connectors: No

Resolutions (all Non Interlaced):

800 x 600 @ 145Hz, 1024 x 768 @ 116Hz

1280 x 1024 @ 88Hz, 1600 x 1280 @ 71Hz

RRP: \$2995



P775

Ah well, we can't all afford 21 inchers can we? But 17 inches is still a respectable size, and this one is the top of Viewsonics' 17 inch range. It's packed full of features like the ARAG coating, the Viewsonic on screen controls, a super contrast screen, and more. And for a 17 inch monitor, it only requires a small amount of desk space, as you can see from the dimensions - and weighs only 20 kilos, which is very respectable for a monitor of that size.

Viewable Area: 16"

Aperture Grille Pitch: 0.25mm

Flat Screen: Yes

Weight: 20.2 kilos

Dimensions: 410mm (W) x 416mm (H) x 444mm (D)

Resolutions (all Non Interlaced)

800 x 600 @ 145Hz, 1024 x 768 @ 116Hz

1280 x 1024 @ 88Hz, 1600 x 1280 @ 76Hz

RRP: \$1495



PT813

This is one of the best of Viewsonics entire range. It's a

21 inch, it's got all the latest technology, along with all the bells and whistles that you'd expect from a high end monitor such as this. And for those that want to get the absolute best look to their onscreen graphics, it comes with BNC connectors for even higher video bandwidth, though it comes with the usual 15-pin connection as well. For Viewsonic, it's carries a pretty hefty price tag, but compared to other top of the range 21 inch monitors it measures up nicely both in terms of price and performance.

Viewable Area: 20"

Aperture Grille Pitch: 0.28mm

Flat Screen: Vertically flat SonicTron

BNC Connectors: Yes

Resolutions (all Non Interlaced)

800 x 600 @ 160Hz, 1024 x 768 @ 132Hz

1280 x 1024 @ 100Hz, 1600 x 1280 @ 85Hz

RRP: TBA - Not available until 3rd Quarter 1998

of PC monitors, they don't have the top rung name of your NEC's or Sony's, but they don't really want it. What they're about is good quality monitors at an affordable price. And lets face it, unless you win one in our giveaways, most of us can only dream about owning one of the big name monitors. Viewsonic's range are priced nicely enough to be within the reach of the average person, and they really are good quality too. We've got three of their top of the range beasts this month, the G810, the PT813, and the P775.

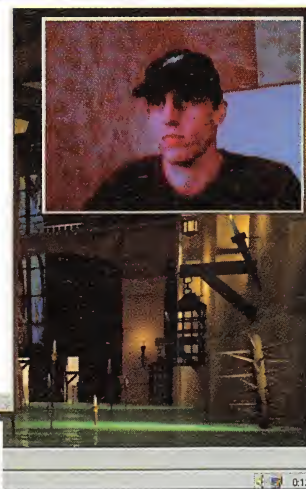
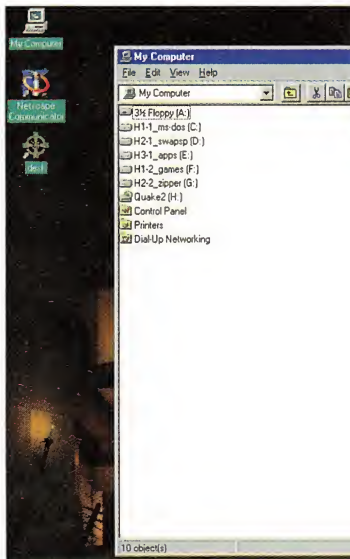


FLYVIDEO II & FLYVIDEO EZ II

Card Specifications:

- PCI 2.1 Compliant video-capture board
- Capable of capturing AVI file video at 30fps
- User selectable video compression between H.263, H.324
- Capable of displaying 4 Video windows at once
- Built in 5 watts RMS per channel amplifier

Video conferencing that's what it's all about. I have always been interested in video conferencing especially one you can video-conference while you are playing on-line. Until the time comes when this is viable we get to videoconference only. I would like to say that this is



The future is now & it's cool. At last, affordable quality video-conferencing is available

the system for you but I believe that the only cool thing about this product that I can find is the fact that the FlyVideo II has a TV tuner built in. That's not to say it doesn't work but it simply wouldn't run on my system. I had to get a willing friend to help me out, but to its credit it did work on his PC.

Once I got to see these units in action I was quite impressed with the quality of the Video produced. The actual Video capture boards both come with composite-in and SVHS-in jacks. The FlyVideo II also has an Antenna-in connection for the cool TV tuner. The FlyVideoEZ II is supplied with a miniature CCD camera, which of course you need if you are video con-

ferencing. Although you could theoretically use one of these boards for direct video capture. These cards are PCI devices so it is quite capable of delivering pretty good video speed.

Both of these boards can also be used with packages such as CU-SeeMe for video conferencing over the Internet. Don't expect to see full screen video at 30 fps though, try more like 176x144 at 22 fps on a Pentium Pro 200. This is a very optimistic figure considering the massive lag and packet loss that plagues the Internet quite regularly. It is still useable though and can be quite fun at times. If you are in the market for a video conferencing kit then I would recommend you give FlyVideo II a look. It may not be in the professional league but it gets the job done.

Video Quality	80%
Ease of installation	60%
Overall Ranking	70%

Garry Wallis

F1 SIM COMPACT

Digital Edge



yoke. In the center remain the 2 programmable buttons, flanked by the Formula 1 style paddle gear-changers at the back of the wheel. All new is a completely useless but strangely pleasing array of flashing

LED's in the center of the wheel. Top stuff this!

More flashing lights on PC peripherals we say! Attaching a PC wheel

The quest for a perfect PC steering wheel continues. The recent arrival of the Digital Edge F1 Sim Compact brings the quest a little closer to completion, but as with most quests for perfection, this one continues at a largely unaffected pace.

The name "F1 Sim Compact" implies a cut down, second generation product. And that's what it is. We covered the original version way back in PCPP #10, at \$699 it was and is still the most expensive wheel and pedal set for the PC. \$699 is a fair price though, the original F1 Sim is a beautiful thing, all metal and as sturdy as you'd want, while being an ergonomic wonder to both use and attach to your desk.

Now the Mk 2 is bolted to the PCPP test desk, and forms the basis for the following report.

The basic design is unchanged. The small wheel now has the top bit cut off and is doing its best impersonation of an aircraft

to a desk and keeping it there has been one of the great design challenges of the 20th century, Thrustmaster continue to demonstrate their complete lack of a clue in this respect, but apart from the Ferraro Advantage 1's purposeful all-metal G-clamp, the F1 Sim Compact shows the way it should be done. The wheel column attaches to a great slab of plastic (wood on the original design), no clamps, no mucking around, just plonk your monitor on top of the sea of plastic and it's there to stay. This is an elegant solution, but the process of setting it in place is a little messy and requires 4 hands if you've got a big monitor.

So far so good, but at less than half the price of the deluxe model, there's got to be more than just the substitution of a slab of plastic in the place of wood to justify the bargain. Look down at the pedals.

Ergonomically they're just fine, your feet slot in there nicely, but

the pedals are little more than on/off switches. Their travel is about an inch... After an extended weekend TOCA test session, we can report that the problem isn't as bad as it looks, you quickly get used to the feel and can exercise almost as much fine tuning as you need. The quality of the rest makes it bearable, but special attention must be drawn to the placement of the plug that goes into the pedal unit - it's right at the front of the unit, right where you'd rest the thing against the wall to keep it stable. This is



Initially the pedals don't feel too good at all... but extended testing proves they're adequate

design idiocy. We ask that whoever is responsible be taken out the back and shot as a priority.

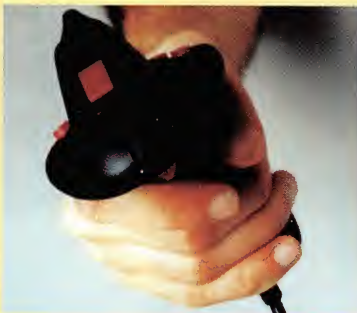
Aside from all that, this is the best sub-\$300 wheel and pedal set around. Call Mindflux on 02 9416 9619.

CYBERSTIK

RRP \$149

BBF Components 039 761 4299

Like Force Feedback, free-floating joysticks have taken a while to mature into something actually usable. Free-floating? For want of a better, generic term, we're talking about the sticks that aren't set in a base, but are waved around in the air freely. Motion sensors in the handgrip tell the game what it is you're wanting to do, but thus far it's been a haphazard affair, with the end result being the on-screen action being only a rough approximation of your gameplaying intentions. Now they're... feasible. I'd hesitate using a stronger way of putting it, for the traditional "fixed" sticks do the job a million times better, but now there is a stick that does the job well enough to be considered as an alternative to your main stick. As good as the free-floating control is, there simply isn't any point in using it. It's a useless gimmick - period. That said, the CyberStik is worthy of consideration because you can use it as a normal stick just by slotting it into the base. With this setup it's simply your regulation 4-button stick with hat. Slip it out every now and then to impress your friends, or maybe just to experience a slightly different kind of gaming. There's no throttle slider, instead you get a go button and stop button. This design verges on the completely useless, which is a shame considering the appeal of the stick in other areas.



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TO BX OR NOT TO BX?

ARE THE SPEEDY NEW 100MHz BUS MOTHERBOARDS WHAT YOU REALLY NEED?

That is the question a lot of people are asking. Should I wait and get a BX based motherboard or go for an LX board now or maybe go for a Super7 based board. The BX chipset should be around by the time this article hits the streets. If I go for a BX board will my current Pentium II chip work? Well that's an interesting question in that it will be up to the motherboard manufacturer if they provide support for the 66MHz bus speeds. You could clock your Pentium II at one of the 100MHz settings but then you will have to run the CPU passed its clock limit which will void your warranty.

BX ME

Intel's BX based chipset will be the first chipset to support the 100MHz front side bus speed setting. What this will mean is the memory speed will increase to 100MHz. Current SDRAM DIMMS sold with Pentium II systems will not be able to cope at these speeds. So forget

about using your current DIMM modules on a new BX board they probably won't work to reliably. Only SDRAM made to the PC-100 specification is guaranteed to run at 100MHz. You will need new RAM and if you care about your CPU you will also need to get a new Pentium II rated at either 350 or 400MHz. A Pentium II rated at 233MHz could quite easily run at 100MHz x 2.5 (250MHz) but most users will not want to risk damaging their processors by overclocking. What has to be said now is that the BX based boards will not provide a speed increase that running a Super 7 board at 100MHz would provide. Check out the table below to see the difference between slot 1 and Super 7 processors.

As you can see from this table the level 2-cache speed on Pentium II systems isn't effected by the system bus speed. Intel's dual bus design allows the level 2 cache to run at 1/2 the speed of the processor or at the same speed as the processor in the Slot 2 version.

PROCESSOR	LEVEL 2 CACHE SPEED	SYSTEM BUS SPEED
PENTIUM 233 MMX	66	66
AMD K6-266	66	66
AMD K6-300 (OVERCLOCKED)	100	100
PENTIUM 250 MMX (OVERCLOCKED)	100	100
AMD K6-3D 300	100	100
PENTIUM II 350	175	100
PENTIUM II 400	200	100
PENTIUM II (SLOT 2) 450	450	100

SUPER7

Super7 is a motherboard design that will allow the system bus speed to be raised to 100MHz. These motherboards will be socket 7 based and will also support bus speeds of 66,75, and 83MHz for backward compatibility. Although these motherboards support 100MHz bus speeds the only processor in the socket 7 market that has actually been announced is the AMD K6-

3D. So you will have to overclock your processor to take advantage of the 100MHz bus until AMD release this much anticipated CPU.

Running the motherboard at 100MHz will also mean that you will need memory that can support this sort of speed. The availability of PC-100 specification SDRAM modules will increase as 100MHz motherboards saturate the market. What is surpris-

THE bleeding edge

The Bleeding Edge has been weeding around to find hardcore techno information for you and there certainly has been a considerable amount going on this month. So without further ado I will start off with some interesting news about OpenGL.

OPENGL 1.2

Silicon Graphics Inc. and other members of the OpenGL Architecture Review Board (ARB) announced the availability of OpenGL 1.2 specification. As most gamers would know

OpenGL is what makes Quake II so cool, it is currently John Carmack's and many others programmers 3D API of choice. With this new release comes increased support for the Windows environment. The new OpenGL version will include a native Windows pixel format for increased speed when run under these platforms. The new specification also includes improved 3D visual quality, increased performance and additional functionality.

Some of the new features include:

Separate Specular Colour - Specular colour highlights can be applied directly to textured objects thereby creating more realistic highlights on the objects facets.

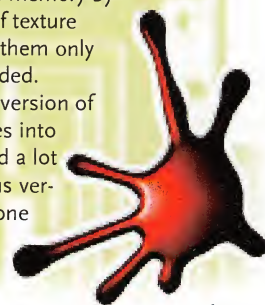
Texture Co-ordinate Edge Clamping - This will allow you to avoid the need to blend the edges of textures or textured pixels. Giving a

smooth transition between seems on and between objects.

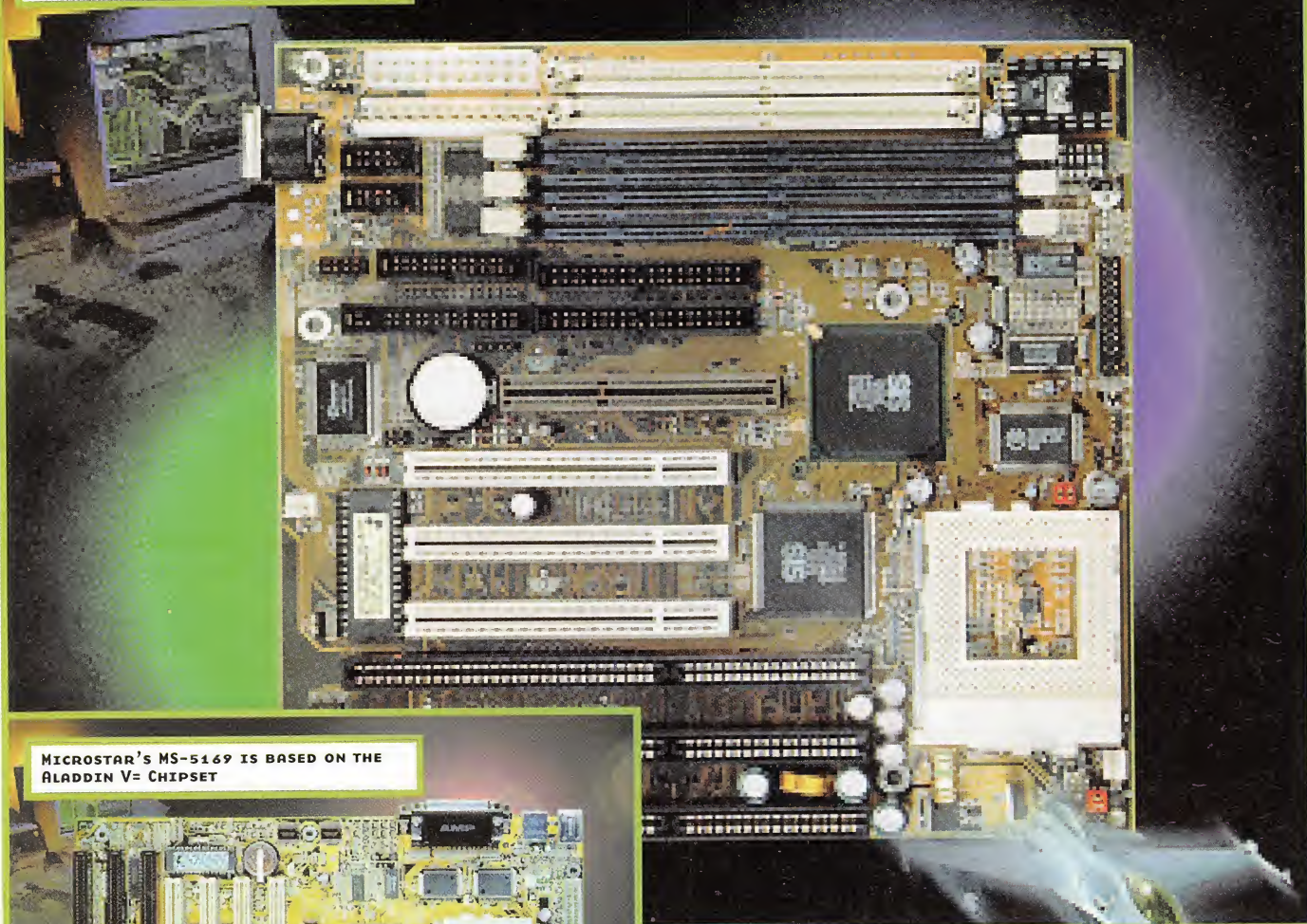
Packed Pixel Formats - This will provide 8/16/32-bit packed pixels formats. These packed pixel formats reduce memory requirements and providing for easier colour conversion.

Texture Level of Detail - This will allow programs to conserve memory by utilising subsets of texture maps and to load them only when they are needed.

We hope that this version of OpenGL penetrates into the Windows world a lot more than previous versions and maybe one day becomes a popular API



WITH ONLY 3 PCI SLOTS, THE M55168 IS CRIPPLED FOR GAMERS



MICROSTAR'S MS-5169 IS BASED ON THE ALADDIN V+ CHIPSET



ing is that it seems that the Socket 7 market will be first of the blocks. Two chipset will support this 100MHz bus speed VIA's Apollo VP3 chipset and Ali's Aladdin V+ chipset. Motherboards are already doing the round based on the VIA

chipset. FIC's latest motherboard called the 1 stVA-503+ is one of the first motherboard manufacturers to officially support 100MHz-bus speed operation. What's great about these socket 7 motherboards is the fact that they also provide support for

among most game programmers. Read the next piece to see why.

DIRECT 3D CAN'T CUT THE MUSTARD.

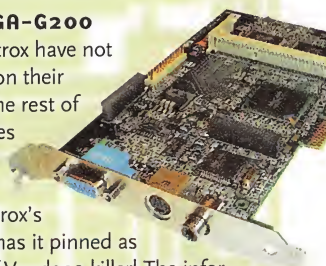
Not everyone loves D3D
One company known as Dynamix has decided that with their latest game in the Earthsiege series to not produce a Direct3D version. Shock, horror! They have said that D3D support will not be provided in Starsiege. There is an apparent problem with D3D, which causes slowdown when downloading textures in Dynamix's game. So what Dynamix will do is write multiple direct API versions of the game for Voodoo2 and other accelerators. Then also provide an OpenGL version for the masses of other cards out there. Sounds like a damn good idea to me.
DirectX 6.0 to use S3 compression technology

Microsoft has been reviewing texture compression technology for possible inclusion in the next incarnation of DirectX. They have decided to go with S3's implementation, which will be included in DirectX6.0. Texture compression will allow high quality textures that use only one quarter the space that is needed at present. But you have to ask what sort of penalty this will cause as textures will have to be compressed and decompressed on the fly without any impairment to the frame rate. If the accelerator has a hardware compressor/decompressor then this may work. The actual texture memory through put could theoretically be quadrupled also, if compression and decompression could occur with no penalty to the texture pipeline. We will have to wait to see what happens as I am sure there will be some implementers of compressed textures that just don't

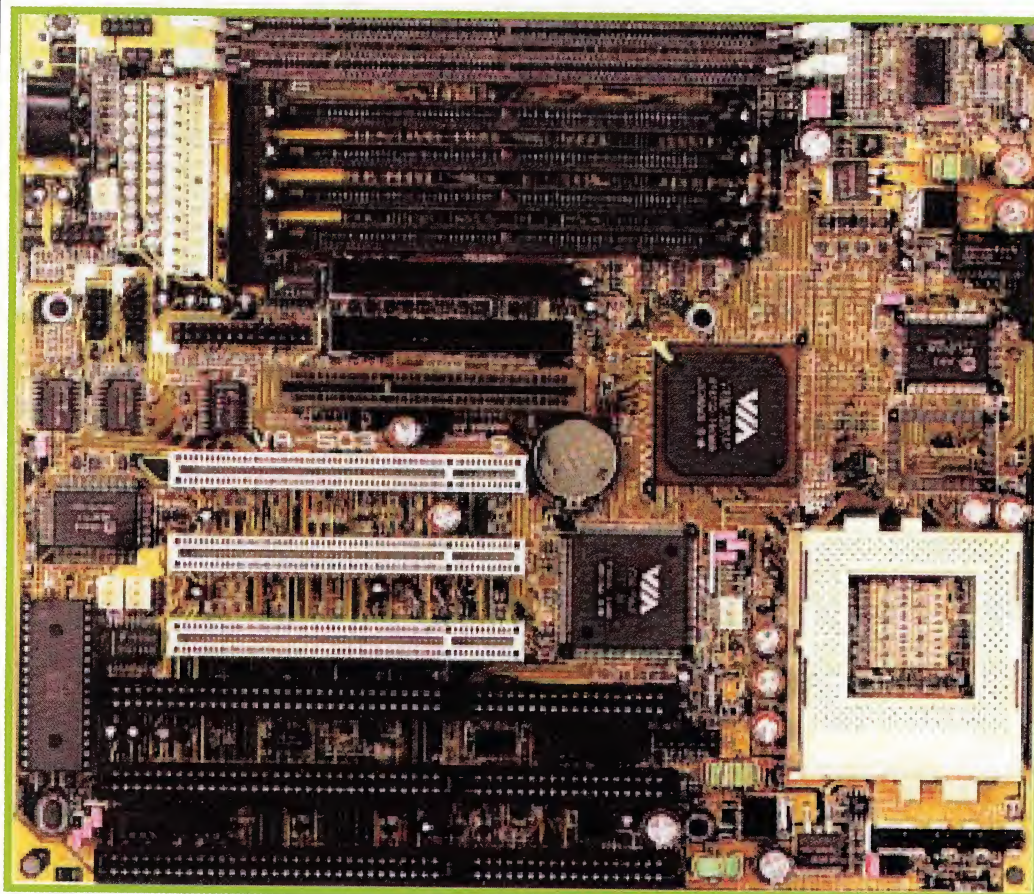
work. There will also be those that will blow us all away, imagine a Voodoo 2 with texture compression. That's 4x the texture storage memory and 4x the texture throughput ... wow!

MATROX MGA-G200

It seems Matrox have not been sitting on their butts while the rest of the world goes hardcore 3D graphics.
News of Matrox's MGA-G200 has it pinned as some sort of Voodoo2 killer! The information I have seen on the card would suggest that this is a definite possibility. This card will perform faster than Matrox's own Millennium II card when performing 2D graphics. Now that's



FIC'S NEW VA503T IS ONE OF THE FIRST OF THE NEW 100MHz BUS BOARDS



we hope to resolve. Next month we will review a set of LX based motherboards and hopefully the month after we will have some Super 7 boards or BX based boards to put through there paces. When these new motherboards finally hit the market you should see the price of LX and 66MHz socket 7 motherboards hit rock bottom. Intel will also reduce the cost of the 66MHz-bus speed Pentium II to make way for the all powerful 100MHz bus speed versions. Wait and see what sort of performance increase you will see with these new boards. I personally believe that if you want a new BX based motherboard you will have to get new RAM and must also get a good AGP card. If you are willing to fork out for these extra parts then go for it. If you just need a good Pentium II based motherboard then read our review of LX based boards next month. Then buy the motherboard marked with the PC PowerPlay Ultimate Hardware badge and you should be happy.

AGP video cards. These motherboards are also quite a bit cheaper than their Pentium II cousins. Couple these Super 7 motherboards with an AMD K6-3D and the speed should match a Pentium II processor clock for clock. Another motherboard to support 100MHz-bus speed is the MS-5169 from Microstar International. This motherboard is based on the other chipset I talked about, the Aladdin V+. From the table before you can see that increasing

the front side bus of socket 7 motherboards not only increases the memory bus speed but also increases the processors level 2-cache speed. This extra 33MHz for the level 2-cache speed can certainly give socket 7 chips a performance boost. Certainly a bigger increase in overall system performance than a Pentium II system would see. What was dogging first versions of these boards is the fact that the AGP slot does not support 2x AGP with DIME so any benefit the

100MHz system bus gives is wasted on these boards. The real benefit from these 1st generation Super 7 boards is in the fact that the level 2 cache speed is increased to 100MHz. When these boards achieve 2x AGP with DIME a lot more people may follow the Super 7 path.

66MHz OR Bust

The question is what sort of performance increase will the new 100MHz bus speed boards provide. Well that is a question

fast but to couple that with a 3D accelerator that would make even 3DFX take a second look. I want one. The 3D-accelerator part will be able to perform all the special 3D effects like perspective correction, trilinear filtering and even fog effects. The MGA-G200 will not be able to perform single pass multi-texturing but Matrox have said that it will still perform the effect but take two passes without taking a huge performance hit. Keep these new 3D chips coming need more speed.

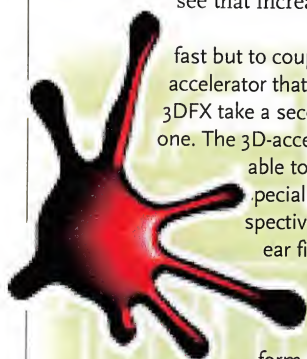
PHASE 5 AMIGA!

Hands up who still have an Amiga tucked away somewhere in the house. Well if you had anything to do with an Amiga in the past you will smile with glee when I tell you about the next Amiga. This new Amiga is set to emerge courtesy of Phase 5 Digital Products. The machine that is currently named the Pre\Box will be a PowerPC based system that will run a modified version of Amiga O/S 3.1. This machine will not have just the one PowerPC processor though, it will have four of them! These machines will also feature a 100MHz-system bus clock and memory interface. The Pre\Box will also have UltraWide SCSI hard disk support as standard. They are also expected to ship with support for the Voodoo2 3DFX chipset. These machines sound like they would go very hard indeed. The FPU perfor-

mance of four PowerPC processors would be enough to play any game, this maybe the machine that you will need to play Quake III when it arrives.

MY PROCESSORS' FASTER THAN YOUR PROCESSOR, SO NAH

IBM released their much anticipated G3 PowerPC processor recently, and Apple didn't waste any time in getting them into their computers. The processor is definitely a Pentium II killer at 400Mhz there isn't a Pentium II that can compete. Or is there? At Cebit in Germany Intel gave the G3 chip the double wammy. Intel demonstrated a 700Mhz version of the Pentium II manufactured on the 0.25 micron process. What I'd give to see that baby fly.



LifeView. Seeing is believing

Fly Video II

Fly Video is a low cost high performance TV tuner, video capture and video conference adapter. It features high resolution display windows, scalable or full-screen, up to 1600 x 1200 and captures 768 x 576.

*In 1600 x 1200 at Hi Color or above mode, Fly Video can simultaneously display 100 windows of the same video source. ►

From \$159 RRP

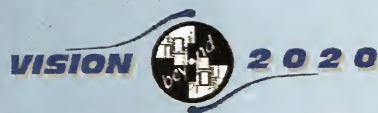
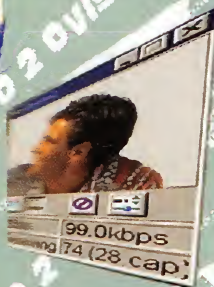


Fly Video EZ II Conference Kit

LifeView's Video Conferencing Kit lets you communicate face to face with anyone around the world at up to 25fps for under a \$1 an hour.

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We like free stuff and when game publishers decide they are going to set up a load of servers and tables, ladders and leagues which we can all be a part of for no charge whatsoever we tend to jump for joy. We are jumping, right now.

This is Activlink

Yes people, welcome to Activlink, Activision Australia's free Internet online gaming service. Once upon a time Activision ruled platforms such as the C64 with a plethora of fantastic games. Then for quite a while it seemed they may go under due to the fact that the only reputable game they had going was Mechwarrior 2 but now, like a Phoenix from the ashes Activision rides again with a bunch of games many companies would die for. But there was just one thing missing, not any more.

So what is so special about Activlink? Basically it will combine some of the hottest multiplayer games around in the finest form possible, and it's free. But wait, there's a hell of a lot more. The new service will feature refined player matching, extensive player ranking and ladder systems, World Wide Web support, FTP capabilities, automatic game updates and chat rooms. So what does half that stuff mean? Read on.

Smart game matching

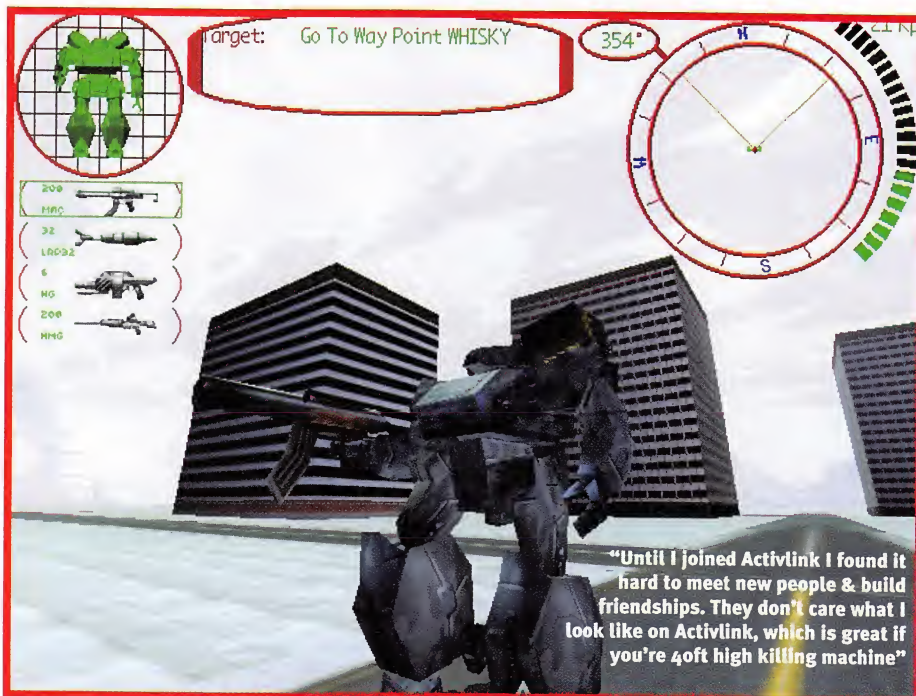
The server will actually track what sort of scores you get in any particular game and, due to what sort of skill you are, attempt to match you up with someone else who is about as good as you. This is a great thing because as we all know, hopping on to your local server to get absolutely pasted is not really all that fun. And, whether you like it or not, winning every game by a mile gets boring pretty quick too. Because of all this tracking of your scores is being done you would expect the ladders and tables to be pretty

darn accurate. Activision aren't leaking much about how this will work yet but be assured it will be pretty special and there won't be any room to rot the system, if you want to be number one you will definitely have to work for it.

Free and easy

Activision say that all their multiplayer games will be Activlink Capable. We know for a fact that Battle Zone is and we are desperately hoping for a certain game starting

with Q. Whatever happens, there will be a wide variety of games due to the developing clout Activision has gathered together over the last couple of years. The trouble with other gameco servers such as Westwood Chat and Blizzard's Battle.net is that they only provide for a couple of games, and while no one can deny they are good games, these servers definitely provide for a very select group of gamers (ok so maybe a lot of people still play Diablo). This definitely pushed people to the pay to play systems such as Multiplay and





Where and how

You can pop on over to Activision's website at the highly originally named www.activision.com which will probably have all the info you need by the time you're reading this. Even if it doesn't it's still a pretty good place to check out all the Activision games and look at job opportunities and other cool stuff which you won't find anywhere else.

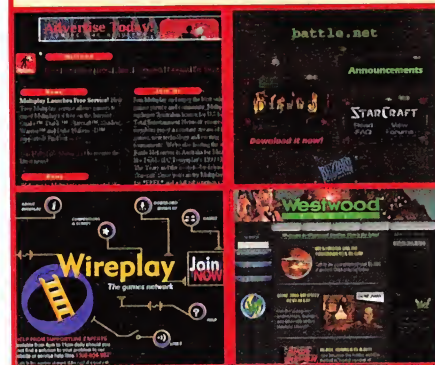
What else is there?

Also some other sites you should be checking into if you're into the whole Multiplayer thing and don't know what's available are: www.multiplay.com.au The home of the truly funky and ultimately cool Multiplay, a Pay to Play net gaming service, great range of games. Check it out with the Multiplay software on this month's CD.

www.wireplay.com.au Telstra's Wireplay can be found here which is a Non net based Pay to play system. Good range of games but seemingly excessive payment plans, hopefully this will change damn soon.

www.battle.net Home of Blizzard stuff where you can hang out if you're into Warcraft, Diablo and Now Starcraft. Good service but limited to only a few games. If you're playing Diablo you'll probably find some cheaters along the way despite all of Blizzard's efforts. A good, Free, net based server system.

www.westwoodstudios.com Another Free net based system, except here you'll be playing the C&C games, including Sole Survivor, and hopefully Tiberian Sun soon too. Mmmmm, nice prospect.



Activlink and check out what's happening. What have you got to lose, as a gamer probably nothing. Perhaps as a normal human being the three hours sleeping "sessions" could get you down but I think most people reading this will have adapted to such living conditions. Throw down the gauntlet, release all that aggression that builds up during your non playing hours and let yourself loose in a world full of people like you. A world where you can stand up, and tear the suckers apart. That world is Activlink, and it's waiting for you.



Wireplay, which, as well all no are very good but definitely not cheap. Activlink will give us the best of both worlds. A wide range of games and zero cost other than normal Net fees. We are in heaven.

And local!

Part of the troubles with Ultima Online was that there was no local servers, causing massive lag. Speed won't be a problem with Activlink, They will have servers right here in Australia with the sort of Bandwidth happening that you would compare to a medium sized ISP. What this means is that the playing field has been levelled, no longer must we be forced to play at half the speed of some cocky meathead from the States who thinks he's good because he can beat someone with 1000 ping when he has a cable modem. It's time to get our own back. John Watts, Managing Director of the Asia Pacific Region says that "ActivLink will be the premiere free multiplayer online gaming service provided by a game publisher in this region" and we really can't argue with that one with the sort of features they're offering.

Actually getting on to Activlink will supposedly be dead easy. You can either access it from within the game, directly from your desktop or from the Web, whichever takes your fancy. Once you have logged on you be faced with current game stats and other cool info to help you get started straight away and if you don't want to jump into the fray just yet you'll also be able to find this information at Activision's Web Site. There is also the promise to keep updating and improving Activlink so it's a truly evolving technology, all in the name of fun, and still for no charge.

Even killing fields

We are being handed on a platter something most of us would pay for. Now winning a game actually has significance. Instead of endless arguments over ICQ as to who is better you can just say "Look at the table buddy, I believe the numbers speak for themselves". It puts you in a place, you can strive for a higher position and you don't have to wonder how good you really are, or how good your opponent is. You're not going to blunder on Thresh in the middle of a killing frenzy any more, unless of course you're up to the challenge.

Something else that will be offered is the ability to play all new missions levels and scenarios only available to

Activlink customers. We assume this is in co-op mode but stranger things have happened and we can't wait for the end result to find out exactly what's going to happen. There is really no reason why anyone who owns an Activision game and a reasonably fast net connection would not want to head on over to

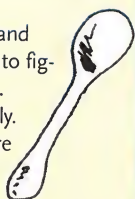


**LOOK READERS!
NEW THING!**

Welcome to the new bit, every month this page will be chock full of stuff which is totally indispensable to any one who wants to surf productively. A big call, yes, but one we can pull off, and perhaps with a bit of your help. If you stumble on a completely funky and cool site of joy please send mail to *spoon-man@hunterlink.net.au* and if it's really hot stuff and we use it you may just find your name on this hallowed page. Oh, and why is it called The Far Site - you try thinking up a funky and witty web site page name that hasn't already been taken... Enough of this rambling, there is surfing to be done.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

Ben told me it could be crazy and well it is a bit but it's not hard to figure out. It's out of five spoons. Pretty easy to understand, really. You'll probably notice that there will be a lot of fours and fives scored, this is because we only want to show you cool stuff and not waste space by telling you what to avoid.



TUCOWS

<http://www.tucows.com>

Need some really cool Aps and need 'em fast? Basically nothing game related but you probably knew that already. TUCOWS has pretty much everything you could ever need to get Windows running like it should which is definitely a good thing. It's well set out, easy to navigate around and provides a lot of background information on each program. They score in cows, we score in Spoons.

SITE DESIGN:



CONTENT:



CD ROM.COM

<http://www.cdrom.com>

There be games here people. Who cares what the site's like, we just want the games eh? Not only games, CD ROM.com has masses of all sorts of software. But since this is a games mag we thought we should point out the ridiculous numbers of game stuff you can get there. Good fast Download times are common and they have an FTP site as well. Presentation also not bad at all.

SITE DESIGN:



CONTENT:



SOUTH PARK QUAKE 2 TC

<http://southpark.scoots.com/sp.asp>

So we crap on about Quake 2 a lot. Getting sick of it yet? Not with Conversions like this. Anyone who doesn't watch SBS at 8:30 PM on Saturday should be shot because South Park would have to be the funniest show ever. Now you can kill Kenny yourself! Marvel at Kyle's Mr Hanky the Christmas Poo weapon, and Cartman's Cheesy Poof Launcher. Easily the best Q2 Conversion so far. Fairly standard site presentation but who really cares.

SITE DESIGN:



CONTENT:



STICK FIGURE DEATH THEATRE

<http://www.calvert.com/sfdt/sfdt.html>

You may have seen a bit on this in one of our sister mags but since it's so cool we had to put it in again. The basic idea of this site is show animated .gif's of stick figures dying in interesting ways. There is only a few official "productions" but there are loads of fan movies as well which most are also excellent and very funny. Check it out for a good hearty laugh. Only loses a Spoon for content because we want more, more, more.

SITE DESIGN:



CONTENT:



Stick Figure Death Theatre



ICQ

<http://www.mirabilis.com>

ICQ has been in version 98 for quite a while now and if you still haven't got it you're in the dark ages. ICQ is one of those programs you don't think you need until you try it out and realise you could never do without it. ICQ is totally free and you need it now. Since it's a full on commercial site its well designed and contains a lot of info about ICQ itself.

SITE DESIGN:



CONTENT:



THE ULTIMATE BAND LIST

<http://www.ubl.com>

It's common knowledge that people who play games listen to music. (Strangely enough a lot of other people listen to music too) and if you're looking for anything relating to any band go check out the UBL. It has links to almost every site which is band related and includes official sites as well as fan's efforts, lyric pages, tab pages and so much more. It's really basic to find what you want as well. Loses half a Spoon in content because there was no links to Frenzal Rhomb.

SITE DESIGN:



CONTENT:



IDIOT BOX



WHAT ON

EARTH IS AN ANIMATED .GIF? A

file with a .gif extension is a picture which can be used as part of an Internet site. An animated .gif has the same principle as the flick cards people used to make with each one having a slightly different picture on them so it created a "moving picture" effect when you flicked past each page really fast. An animated .gif is a whole bunch of gifs put together in the same way to form an animation.

SO WHAT'S ICQ SUPPOSED TO MEAN

THEN? I Seek You is a program with which you can message people on line and conduct Real Time chat and file transfers and is a necessity in today's Online community. Check PCPP #17 for a full run down.

I DON'T WATCH SOUTH PARK, IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME? Seek professional help immediately.

ACCELERATE NOW!

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3D FEATURES	VELOCITY 128	Millenium	Mystique
Flat & Gouraud Shading	•	•	•
Point-Sampled Texture Maps	•		•
Bilinear Texture Filtering	•		
Trilinear Texture Filtering	•		
Perspective Correction	•		•
MIP-Mapping	•		
Z-Buffering	•	•	•
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GOT A PROBLEM? WRITE TO ASHTON - HE GIVES A DAMN!

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WHEN YOU WRITE, REMEMBER TO INCLUDE AS MUCH PERTINENT INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE. SEND YOUR CONFIG.SYS AND AUTOEXEC.BAT AND ANY ASSOCIATED *.INI FILES FOR WINDOWS THAT MIGHT TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM. GIVE ME AS DETAILED AN EXPLANATION AS YOU CAN AND BE SURE TO INCLUDE AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE ABOUT YOUR PC. FEEL FREE TO EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS OR, IF YOU WANT TO SNAIL MAIL, PLEASE REMEMBER TO WRITE CLEARLY OR BETTER STILL, PRINT YOUR LETTERS. PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE VOLUME OF MESSAGES WE RECEIVE, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE A RESPONSE TO YOUR QUERIES.

PAGING PROBLEMS

Q I would like to be enlightened by those at PowerPlay as to what a page fault is, because my computer is suffering from Acquired PageFault Syndrome. It gets very sick when I play just about any game, Quake, Red Alert, Tie Fighter, Transport Tycoon, C&C... and the list goes on. I also get General Protection Faults in win 3.11 (I don't have win 95).

I'm a bit disappointed because I recently upgraded it to an IBM 6x86mx pr200 and new motherboard + et6000 and 32mb of ram. I have run Norton Utilities but that says there is nothing wrong with it.

Page faults are a pain in the arse and i'm getting very annoyed hitting the reset button every 10 minutes. Thanks
Shahazz, Internet

A A page fault is basically a memory error — a page of memory didn't contain what it was meant to contain. A GPF is somewhat different and occurs when a program tries to issue a CPU command that it's not allowed to do. By default most OSes take advantage of the CPU's 'protected mode' to stop programs issuing commands that can disable a system, and any attempt to do so is trapped. While this stops bad programs screwing up your data, trapping still stops your system because the program at fault can't continue and must be killed. This is why you don't get GPF's in DOS, because DOS doesn't use protected mode (though DOS games can.)

Now given DOS is a really nice and basic OS, if you're getting page faults it's safe to assume it's a hardware problem, not a software problem which (although unlikely) can occur under Windows. Page faults are

most likely to occur when memory is being run faster than it can handle (or the machine is overclocked) — bytes go missing and hence information that should be there isn't when a program goes looking.

Get into your BIOS and look for options to tweak memory speed — things like 'RAS cycles' and 'Fast refresh' and so on. Generally larger values are slower. Slow everything down and see if that helps. If it does, re-enable the options one by one to speed your machine up again until you find the offending setting.

A FEW SECTORS SHORT OF A CLUSTER

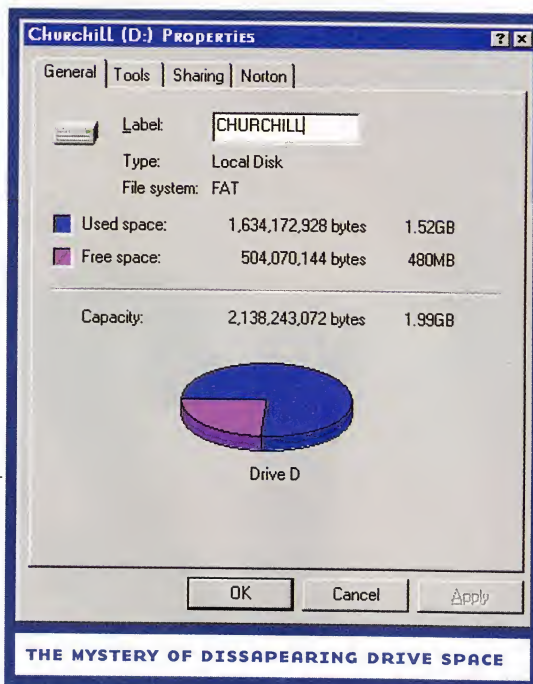
Q I'm writing to you because I'm finding my harddrive space is disappearing. It all started on a rainy afternoon and I wanted to continue my eternal quest for more drive space. I was stumped when I selected everything in C drive and hit properties and found that out of my 1.18 Gb hard-disk only 730 Mb was either taken up or free. I tried a dir/s in dos and ended with the same result. I made sure it showed all file types and the same day defragmented my disk, shortly after I scanned it. So the only other explanation is that my brother has a few thousand small files, could I be fallen a victim to sector sizes as well? but surely it couldn't take up 300 Mb? or could it ???
Chris, Internet

A It's a fact of life that the more programs you install on your PC... the more drive space that will 'disappear'. This is a perfectly natural phenomenon, as it were. However just to put your mind at rest I'll try and clear up what you're seeing.

Firstly if you are selecting 'all' from, say, Explorer on drive C: to tally up your allocated space then Windows will calculate the total size of all your files, not the space they are taking up. So yes, if you had lots of small files you could easily lose loads of space due to sector sizes and it wouldn't be reported by Windows.

Secondly, if you instead click on the 'drive' icon in Windows or perform a DIR /S from the root you will see the amount of space allocated, which includes space lost to sector sizes (and yes, you could easily lose 300M)

Lastly, your windows 'drive' has a limit of 1G, not 1.18G. I'm assuming you've only got one partition here so your maximum space is around the 1G mark (it's a FAT limitation), and so you've got 180M of physical drive you're simply not using and can't use unless you repartition.



"HOW TO BUY A PC AND WIN"

Q This I wouldn't call a hard and fast rule but one I think to take into consideration.

Check how long the shop has been operating for. Now a shop that has been around for years may still close tomorrow but there is a higher chance that the local yokel who has only operated for a few months really doesn't have much of an inclination just how cut-throat computer retail is and when he finds that you can't make a profit on 10% margins he decides to pack it all in. When asking make sure to find out how long the actual shopfront itself has been operating because the owner may have purchased a franchise and it is no good knowing the Company XYZ has been operating for years when individual branches keep on going broke
Glenn Martin, Canberra

A Thanks Glenn for the addition to our purchasing advice!

THE MEANING OF 'K'

Q This is something that has been bugging me for a while, I hope you can explain. I have a 33.6k Modem and my ISP uses 56k Modems. My question is this, why is it, that when I am downloading something, I am getting transfer rates averaging 2.4k per second. Now assuming I am downloading a 1mb file, if it was being transferred at a constant 33.6k per second, I would have the file in 30 seconds. At 2.4k per second, it takes around 7 minutes. I understand that it is highly unlikely, impossible even for a 33.6k/second transfer to be sustained, but 2.4k seems real slow. I am considering

upgrading to a 56k Modem to match up with my ISP, and hopefully get better speeds from that. I wonder though, what is the maximum speed a phone line can handle?

Robert Hayes, Townsville

A When you see references to 'k' in modems it's actually talking about 'kilobits per second', or Kbps. When you download and you see your average transfer rate in 'k' that refers to 'Kilobytes per second' or KBps. Now what you actually achieve in a transfer is affected by modem and line quality, location of source site (overseas or user-packed sites are going to be slower) and the type of data you are transferring. Modems can actually transfer more than their stated rate using compression — but this applies only to data that can be compressed, such as text. Zip files and the like are already compressed and modem compression can even slow down such transfers. Were all these factors at their best you can expect to obtain on or near your modem's maximum transfer rate, higher for uncompressed data (that is a 33.6kbps modem can sustain around 3.5k a second). This is why you should always set your port rate one level higher than your modem's maximum transfer rate. Got a 33.6? Set it to 57600. It not only helps receiving but also sending since the PC can compress and send data to the modem at a higher rate.

Now, funnily enough, phone lines (trusty old analog) can only handle a maximum of around 35kbps and 56k modems don't so much MoDem data (modulate-demodulate) but 'encode' it between the digital hardware at the end and your modem. Even this isn't completely efficient over phone lines and average connects for 56k modems range between 42kbps and 55kbps. Also, 56k modems can only upload at 33.6kbps.

A FEW BYTES SHORT OF A MEG

Q I've been trying to download programs from Tucows and whenever I try it comes up with a box that says you have started to download a file of type null click more info to learn how to extend navigators capabilities and 4 boxes at the bottom which say more info pick app save file cancel what do I do? please help

Michael Patton, Internet

A Er... Click 'save file'? If you don't want Netscape to try and work out what the file is, and you know you want to download it, hold down SHIFT when you click on the filename to start the download.

Random Access

Welcome to Random Access, a column dedicated to interesting, useful and informative tips about anything and everything to do with your PC. Be it hardware, software, DOS or Windows you'll find tips and tricks listed here every month. If you have some tips of your own you'd like to share with other gamers such as yourself feel free to send your tip into Setup and, if we publish it, we'll be sure to credit and print your name.

This month we have a collection of reader-submitted tips. Thanks guys!

COMMAND-LINE ARGUMENTS

Sick of changing the Properties Command-line option every time you want to add different parameters to an executable (eg. trying out Quake patches)? Just put a '?' at the end of the executable where it says "Cmd line" in the "Program" tab of the Properties menu (right-click on a program and select 'Properties'). For example; 'c:\quake\quake.exe?'. This will prompt you to enter parameters which it will pass to the program.

SHORTCUT TO 'RUN' ON THE DESKTOP

The 'Run' option on the Start menu is often useful; but tiresome to get to (oh no; Taskbar->Start->Run so much effort!); but impossible to place on the desktop. Almost. Create a batch file and place in it:

```
start %1 %2 %3 %4 %5 %6 %7 %8 %9
```

Save it as 'c:\run.bat'. Now create a shortcut on the desktop to 'c:\run.bat ?' and you will have a pseudo-run dialog box ready whenever you need it!

Both of these excellent tips come from Kaj "Quakeman" Haffenden, an avid Quake player perhaps?

FILE TRANSFER, THE EASY WAY

"Hi, This is a useful tip for those who need to transfer files large or small from one computer to another without a lot of setup hassle. Click start -> program files -> accessories -> hyper terminal -> hypertrm. Then set up your method of connection by choosing the com port for your modem or the serial cable to the other computer the rest is just a matter of clicking the send button and choosing the file to send. Note that the other computer must be set up correctly and be waiting to receive the file by clicking on the receive button. This program is much easier to use than the Direct Cable Connection utility that comes with Win95."

Thanks go to Chris Wilksch for this tip!

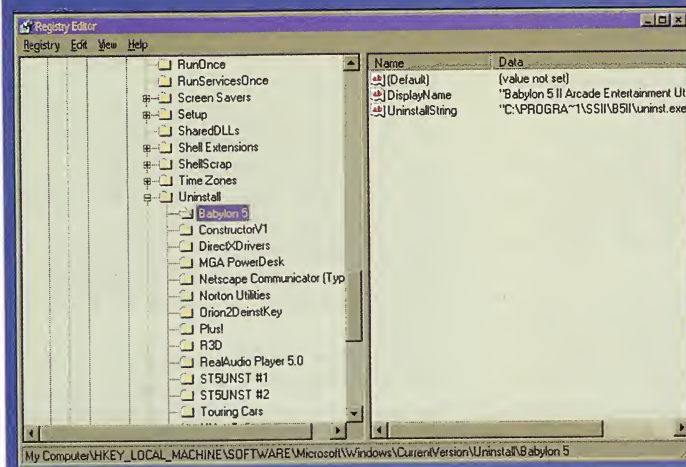
CHANGING THE PROGRAM LIST

"Another way to get rid of those annoying programs in the add/remove section that give you the hated "Cannot find such and such file, uninstall aborted" Is to go into the system registry directly (taking all precautions to backup the registry of course before making any changes) From "Start" go to "Run" and type "Regedit". Go to the following path

\key_local_machine\software\microsoft\windows\currentversion\uninstall

The name of the program will appear in the right hand screen the same as it does in the Add/Remove programs window. Highlight the one you want to get rid of and hit delete. N.B. Just be sure not to delete something else by mistake because changes are made "real time", you cannot undo them."

You can thank Glenn Martin for this handy tip!



ONE OF THE WAYS TO GET RID OF OLD PROGRAMS FROM THE 'ADD/REMOVE PROGRAMS WINDOW', JUST ONE OF THE ANNOYING PROBLEMS WITH WINDOWS '95

GAMES GAMES GLORIOUS GAMES!

ORACLE
PC POWERPLAY
78 RENWICK ST.
REDFERN
NSW 2016
SETUP@PCPOWERPLAY.NEXT.COM.AU

Come little ones, come. The Oracle has been busy, busy, busy. Now, what pressing problems have been troubling you this month?

SPYCRAFT

? I own the game Spycraft and I can't get past Moscow. I am sure that I have gathered all the info that I need. Can you please tell me what I have to do in Moscow before I can Move on.

BRAD ROWDEN
SYDNEY, NSW

***** Brad, I could give you the answers to the questions you seek, but what's in it for me. \$10,000 in unmarked bills and you have yourself a deal. Yeah right! :) Here's what to do. When you first arrive at, talk to Maxine and go to the Interrogation Room. Talk to Ying. Tell her you've got Grendel and you will set him free if she'll talk. Don't threaten her with Grendel's death and don't take her to the Bullpen or she won't tell anything. Read the incoming messages. Examine the Procat files in Intelink > Datalink > CIA > Authorised > Procat. Go to Foster's office, talk to her about SYR, Birdsong and Gromchevski. Go to Pearson's office, read the incoming messages for Gromchevski's phone number. Use phone, press Speaker and dial 2334819. Go to Moscow > Yasevno. Talk to Yuri. He tells you that in Russia, the Mafia is everywhere and offers you a meeting with one of the supposed mafia heads and presidential candidate Churbanoff. Go to Moscow > Birdsong and talk to him. Don't threaten him, just tell him to try and find out something about the president hit. Go to Moscow > Station > Lobby > Pearson, take the yellow paper from the desk. Open the casefile to the left of your table, take the folder marked Nukes. Take the floppy. Now use EMBC floppy from your case on computer and download Rabid Hound book. Use Nuke floppy on computer, find message Subj: Gog and Magog, view header, launch Cypher and select Beale > Other > Rabid Hound. Then do so with Subj: Re: Gog



and Magog message. Read the incoming. Soon you should receive the message from Colby about an another upgrade to your Eclipse tool and the access to the agents' Holt and Seaton cabinets. You may want to fly to Washington to examine their rooms and report to Colby that the traitor is within Team Eagle Shield, but he will not take your suspicions seriously. Go to Moscow > Vilnius. Then return back to office. Check out Intelink > Datalink > CIA > Authorised > Procat. There's a name John Blake there - access his dossier and check out his contact phone number (011441715550909). Make an appointment with Blake. Go to London.

In London talk to Blake. While he's out take a look at his laptop and books beside it. Take the Procat folder from him. Return to Moscow, Pearson's office. Read the folder, especially the bits about Onyx, Kneecaps and Harmonica. Use Intelink > Datalink > CIA > Onyx. Look under all of the aliases in Ticket Data section. As you know from the file, Onyx is vegetarian, he flies business class and passage seats only. You'll find out that he stopped in Berlin, report it. Read the incoming mail to find out about the Birdsong's disappearance. Load up Sound Analysis and mark the outside sounds on the phone record - bells, plane, etc. You'll find out that he's in Novosibirsk, at Suvorov's. Later, when Foster asks you how to make Birdsong cooperate tell her to promise him a house in Montana.

Go to Moscow > Birdsong. Open his door with the lockpick (in your case). Look at his room - he's obsessed with western culture. Turn L, when Lange enters and when

starts talking to you select Shoot. Return to the Station and go to the Alley. The girl gives you Yuri Gromchevski's file. Read it. Enter office and you will hear a call from Yuri. Pick up the phone and go to Moscow > Yasevno. Yuri will give you the Onyx folder. Return to Moscow > Station > Lobby > Pearson. Fire up Intelink > Datalink > CIA > Authorised > Onyx > CEFT. Look up the banknotes' serial numbers and when and where they were spotted, then compare it with data on airplane tickets database. You discover that Onyx is in Heidelberg, Germany, at Schlumphthen hotel.

TWINSIN'S ODYSSEY

? I have only just started playing Twinsen's Odyssey and I'm stuck (I'm not the adventuring type but thought I'd give it a go). Please tell me how to free the lighthouse keeper from the cave (I know where he is but can't get him out) and is that all I have to do to stop the storm?

ASH THRIFT
MELBOURNE, VIC

***** So, you can't find our good friend Roph the lighthouse guard huh? Well he's not really our friend, a lot of people don't seem to like him much which might explain why he has disappeared. After asking his fiance where he might be, we find out he was captured by the Tralu while taking walks on the cliff. Go to the cliffs, you'll see a small entrance with a sign and a snake in front of it. Go through, come out, and then proceed to the next cave whilst being careful



of the dangerous jumps. When you arrive, you will see Raph in a makeshift jail, crying for you to don your old robe and help him again. As such, you need to become a warrior of Sendell once again. Go back to the Museum. Where now, the clerk doesn't recognize you, so you must pay to get in. Go outside, and climb in through the window on the 2nd story and unlock the door and the case holding your robe, then walk down and don your robe. Travel back to the cliffs and note the switch next to the open door and next to the small room with the table? Aim carefully and knock the switches with the golden ball. Successfully doing this will cause the gate to open and allow you to go to the next room. Continue until you get to a room with some big huge furry thing called "Tralu". Bewt tactic is to go to "Sporty" mode, and run around, only pausing to get a throw or two in. If that fails, try "Aggressive". With the baddy eliminated, talk to Raph, and then lead him out. Walk with Zo to the lighthouse (right next door) and watch in wonder as the wizard does his magic.

TOMB RAIDER 2



I need help with a game Tomb Raider 2. I don't know how to finish level 3 Bartoli's hideout. I'm up to a part where there's about 4 fires and below is ledges with water. I've gotten past this and now I'm at a room like a hall with a fire place

and 3 windows with water outside. Where do I go after this. Also at Laras home where is the key to the door in her room.

CHRIS BYRNES
SYDNEY, NSW



Well Chris, you needn't worry about the key to the door for Lara's room yet, without giving anything away at all (Well, Ok, I'm giving something away), that's something reserved for the "very" end of the game.

After jumping the fire, the door opens as you approach and a gunman and his dogs attack. Kill them all then jump to the slope box and jump and grab and pull up onto the lowest chandelier. Do a running jump to the right to grab the ledge. Pull up and flip the switch to open a door behind the fire in the fireplace. Jump back to the chandelier then turn and jump to the next highest chandelier. Do another running jump to the ledge on the right to flip another switch which

opens a painting on the wall which conceals the Library Key. Return to the chandelier then turn right and jump to the next highest light and finally to the ledge above. Kill the approaching rats then continue in their direction and jump and grab and shimmy to the right until you can pull up. You should now be on the highest rafter so run and jump to the wood floor by some bricks. Kill the henchman behind the bricks and take the medkit. Be careful not to fall off as any fall from this height is instant death. Climb on the bricks and head left and jump to reach another switch. Flip it to adjust the chandelier height so you can access the Library Key. Jump back to the bricks then go down to the chandelier and jump until you reach the light next to the Library Key. Do a running jump to grab and pull up and get the key then repeat to get back out on the chandelier. Jump all the chandeliers until you are on the other side then do a running jump and grab to the ledge. You won't grab but you will land on the ledge and this saves you from having to return to that last switch to adjust the chandelier heights. Exit to the window sill and go right. You should see the fire below, so hang and drop down to land in the water and not the fire. You should now be outside the Library door. Flip the underwater switch and swim through the door that opens as a result. Head to the right and surface. You should see a gap in the floor to your left. It's dark down there so light a flare and

head into the opening. This turns into a maze rather quickly so follow these directions.

As you swim into the hole turn to the right and go around the corner. Swim into the large opening then go through the smaller opening near the top of the wall. Turn right after entering the smaller passage then find the small opening to the lower-bottom-left of the wall. Enter and immediately turn left to find some grenades before continuing back to the right to find Secret #2; the Gold Dragon. Flip the nearby switch then head straight up to the newly opened door where you can finally take a breath. Do NOT climb out here or you will burn to death. Instead, retrace your path through the maze back to the library door.

And that's all I'm gonna give ya!

ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR



I'm currently having some difficulties with Zork Grand Inquisitor. I've got the rocks (sucked out of the food dispenser) and I've dowsed them in cola so now I've got 45 seconds to do something. Please what is it I have to do to avoid death?

COLIN DISBOROUGH
BLACKTOWN, NSW
(AGE 75 YEARS OLD)



Bless ya Colin, 75 years old, that's so cool. Not only does it prove that united, gamers share a common bond beyond even generation, that of the games we play! Not only that, but your age really messes up with the magazine demographics. Oh to be in advertising!! *laugh*

The point where you're having difficulty is at GNU Tech where behind the fountain are three different food and drink machines. After plugging the Frobozz Electric Vacuum Sucker into the candy machine to the right, we take use of our zorkmids and buy a Zork Rock candy bar. Unfortunately it's stuck short thereafter. But after turning on the Vacuum Sucker, the candy bar surrenders. Take the Zork Rock and also buy item #11 (it has a use later on). At the machine to the left, the right access reveals the 0BIDIL spell that can't be used at the moment. Place the Zork Rock in the middle machine and buy a Classic Blam. Moving quickly is vital now. In the room behind the corridor are twelve lockers. The bio-detergent bomb has to be put into the second locker in the middle row. (Your 45 seconds). In the blown up locker we find the Dungeon Master's ID Card, in the locker at the bottom (Number 11), lays a Z-Pill. The ID opens -in the same room- the door to the Spell Lab.

CHEATING IS THE ANSWER

DAGGERFALL

As soon as you start the game get a cart first then when changing travel modes select the cart and it becomes a horse! No need to buy one.

To get an unlimited supply of money, travel to each country and borrow the max amount of money from each bank. You will have a full YEAR to pay this money back and in the mean time you can get a boat, a house and when you reach the right level buy all the magic items that you want! and still have plenty of money left over to get a head start on repaying your loans in time.

Get a boat 1st because once you have one you will NEVER need a hotel again, when out doors, just step onto your boat and sleep all you want. 2nd no matter who is after you, they can get you at the inns or even in your own home, but NOT on the boat! It is a fool-proof safe haven for you, cut down on travel time, some places you will be able to get to quicker by boat (but most places take LONGER by boat but it's worth checking out you can shave a full week off of your travel time if you check your options).

Recall will save you days of travel time! When accepting a simple quest cast your recall spell at the place that you must return to NOT at the dungeon entrance. Once you have taken the object of your quest you can use the extra time to wonder through the dungeon or just cast your recall spell immediately and you are teleported right back to the quest giver. You should be able to handle up to three times the quests in less then half the time! Try it and see!

FALLOUT V1.1

Take the job to do the girl who runs the blades (by the man who says she killed his son). After you have received your reward talk to him again and tell him to give you the reward again, he will keep giving you money until you stop asking! (Remember that if you tell him you made her suffer you will get an extra 500 everytime you ask)"

EASTER EGG FOR THE DIG

Anywhere in the game when you're walking around as Boston, press CTRL-B. Boston will flex his biceps! If you do it near Maggie she'll make comments (some of which must be inside jokes, because they make no sense).

HEAVY GEAR

During the game, hold down CTRL-ALT-SHIFT and type :

bedouinprince = invulnerable

checkmatein2 = Auto win mission

hesbackandhesgotagun = unlimited ammo

deplikespudding = free-eye mode (navigate using CTRL + arrow keys)

WORMS 2

The followings are passwords for the 45 missions:



- 1.ONCEUPONA
- 2.TIMETHEREWERE
- 3.SOMESMALLWORMS
- 4.WHOGOTVERYVERY
- 5.ANNOYEDAND
- 6.DECIDEDTO
- 7.GOTOARMSIN
- 8.ORDERTOWIPE
- 9.OUTTHEIR
- 10.VICIOUSENEMY
- 11.COUNTERPARTS
- 12.THEYDEVELOPED
- 13.SOMEREALLY
- 14.COOLWEAPONSSUCH
- 15.ASBANANABOMBS
- 16.ANDMAGICBULLETS
- 17.THEYTRAINED
- 18.ALLNIGHTSAND
- 19.EVERYDAYSO THEY
- 20.WOULD BECOME
- 21.PROFICIENT
- 22.IN THEIRWORMLY
- 23.WAYSSOMETIMES
- 24.THEYWOULDSHOOT
- 25.GRANNIESJUST
- 26.FORFUNANDLAUGH
- 27.ABOUTITINTHE
- 28.EVENINGTIME
- 29.WEAPOLOGISEON
- 30.BEHALFOFALLTHE
- 31.TERRITORIES THAT
- 32.WEWENTTOTHE
- 33.TROUBLEOFTRANSLATING
- 34.WORMS2INTOBUTWE
- 35.DIDNTHAVETIMETO
- 36.TRANSLATETHESE
- 37.PASSWORDSNOTTHAT
- 38.THEYNEEDTOBEDONE
- 39.WESUPPOSETHAT
- 40.YOUAREREALLY
- 41.EXPECTINGTO
- 42.SEEAWONDERFUL
- 43.CHEATMODEWHEN
- 44.FINISHTHEMISSIONS
- 45.ANDYOUARERIGHT

To activate cheat codes, just type them in with CAPS LOCK on whilst holding SHIFT,

including the asterisks' at the beginning and end then Press backspace after typing it in. Your worm should jump up and the message. "OKAY" should appear.

****SUPERSHOPPER**** = Weapon crates with a secret weapon in each one.

****BACKFLIP**** = As the name implies.

****HIGHJUMP**** = worms jump really high

****REDBLOOD**** = worms bleed when getting hit

****GODMODE**** = For infinite life. All worms are affected, your's and your enemies.

Worms can only be killed by drowning.

MYSTERIES OF THE SITH (ADDON TO JEDI KNIGHT)

(type "t" enter code, hit enter)

iamagod = Uber-jedi

diediedie = All Weapons

gimmestuff = Full Inventory

gameover = Level Jump

statuesque* = Freeze Enemies

trainme = Force Level Up

freebird = Fly Mode

boinga* = God mode

trixie = Full Mana

cartograph = Show Map

gospeedgo* = Slow-mo mode

quickzap = Warp to spec. coord.

*- These codes must have a (space) then a r or a o after them. r is on, o is off.

DARK REIGN

To activate cheats in Dark Reign in the game directory path 'Dark Reign\Dark\Shell', you'll find a file called 'shellcgf.h'. Right click on it and select properties and then un-check the 'read only' box. In this text file you'll find a section called 'menu mission buttons' under which you will see the line '**#define BTN_MISSION_COEFFICIENT 150**'. Change the value '150' for the value '157' so that the line reads '**#define BTN_MISSION_COEFFICIENT 157**'.

That's it. Now when you run the game, you'll be able to select any mission from the dial in the shell by pressing the new 'cheat' button in the bottom left corner.



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If you're not sure about something, call us on 02 9699 0311 or email backissues@next.com.au

BLADERUNNER

The PC PowerPlay Playguide

Live a little longer... let the sultry sounds of Vangelis wash over you as the emerging sunrise peeks over the cityscape. A sunrise seen through tired blurred eyes. They're out there, you know that much, but where?

That's the question that plagues you now, and you're ready to give up. But don't! There are those who will help. From the shadows we emerge, a clue to propel you towards that which deep down you already know.

"Shakes? Me too. I get them bad. It's part of the business." - Deckard.

Note: This walkthrough assumes the player has an unsympathetic agenda towards replicants.

Act I.

RUNCITERS

It all started at Runciters, man, that place was a mess. Now remember a good rep-detec knows how to look, so survey your surroundings. Get the piece of chrome on the ground and examine the fire hydrant. Talk to the officer at the scene. Get him to question the crowd (click the crowd) and enter Runciters.

Start by questioning Runciter. He's an abrupt egoist, so don't expect him to actually be co-operative. Question him continuously until he gives you Lucy's reference letter. In the top left quarter of the screen, there's a

camera, click it. Runciter isn't too quick and simply informs you that it was shot. Click it again and he'll give you the data disk from it. With that in your possession, it's time to examine Lucy's area, click the desk at the back of the shop.

At Lucy's desk there's a number of clues you need to collect. Start with the large toy dog to the left and then pick up the chopstick wrapper under the desk. It's well hidden so look sharp. Finally, grab the candy bar on the desk and exit back outside. Once out of the shop, talk to the police officer again, his questioning has paid off. Hmmm, what was it that Lucy was up to? Enter your spinner and return to the police station.

POLICE STATION

Once at the station go to the second floor and enter the mainframe room to the right. Click on the monitor to the right of the screen in the mainframe room to upload and receive data to your kia. Then click on the large monitor in the middle to access the esper.

In the first image, drag a box around the small table in the rear, then zoom out. Notice Lucy's head just behind the Tiger cage. Zoom in on that. Now, zoom out and note her foot as she steps out. Zoom in on it and take particular note of her ankle bracelet. With those clues found, exit to the next image.

In the second image, all the action appears to be occurring around the door. Start by selecting the dark figure in the door. Ah, it's a pic-

ture of the replicant himself. Next, zoom out and go for the car. You're looking for a shot of the car that identifies it as a ground car. Zoom out again and go for the license plate of the car. It's not easy, but has to be found.

COMBAT SHOOTING COURSE

When all the hard copies have been taken, exit and go through the next door directly opposite your current door to the left. This is the shooting range. Do the "Combat

**"I've done... questionable things. Nothing the God of biomechanics wouldn't let you into heaven for."
- Roy Batty**

Shooting course". Note: enemies guns will be lit up "blue" don't fire until you can see the blue gun. You can check your score by clicking on the monitor in the hallway. When finished, enter the elevator and go to level 3, the lab. In the lab, continue to click Dino until he's got zip left to tell you. Return to your spinner (on the roof) and it's time for some sushi. Head to Chinatown.

CHINATOWN

At Chinatown, the bustle around you doesn't seem quite like the kind of place a replicant would want to be, but these 6's are just too cocky. Start by talking to Howie Lee, (The owner in blue) and continue to keep clicking on him until all questions have been asked. Seems Zuben was getting a little nervous. Why would that be? Follow him into the back room kitchen and talk to him. Save your game here. Zuben's got a bit of a problem and doesn't like you questioning him, as soon as he spills the pot, furiously click the mouse button to get away.

He's a replicant all right, Crystal said it was all in the gut feeling but this guy just didn't smell right from the start. The chase is on. Follow him out the door and down the alley. Continue on through the door at the end of the alley and DON'T stop to talk to the homeless man. If you do, Zuben will get away. If you're a spineless replicant sympathiser you might want to do this, but for the rest of us continue through the door at the top of the stairs. Enter the hallway and click on the door at the end of the hall. Zuben will jump down and attack. Hit him fast and hit him hard, preferably in the head. When he's motionless

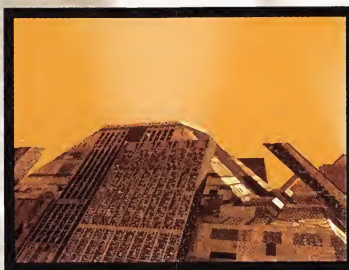
at your feet, click him to search him. Hmmm, a war hero, tough break, he should've stayed off world though. Go outside and talk to Gaff then get in your spinner and head to your apartment.

BACK HOME

At your apartment, venture out onto the balcony for a view of the city, come in and listen to your answering machine, then hit the bed. (Note: *Don't feel too bad about killing Zuben in this circumstance, if you don't take him out there, he'll be waiting to kill you at your apartment.*)

Act 2. THE TYRELL BUILDING

After awaking you will receive a Vid-call from Guzza. He informs you of the nights previ-



ous murder and to head out to the Tyrell building. Go there. Upon arriving, talk to the security guard and he will give you the disk containing the nights footage. Enter the elevator to the Grav Test control room. Look carefully and at the Grav control room, notice on the floor an earring, and a brochure. The earring is just outside the door and the brochure is underneath the monitoring equipment. Enter the Grav Test room.

Nothing can prepare you for entering a room where someone's had explosive taped to them and then painted across the walls in a 100 different brush strokes. The smell was getting to me so better hurry, in the room click the body, then pick up the dog collar and the take out box from "Kingston Kitchen". Then get out of there. Outside, click the small monitor on the left hand side of the large computer system, lucky you have that dog collar, his dogs name for a password, that's original. Take the info you need from the system and then go downstairs to talk to Crystal, then the security guard again. Make sure you keep clicking on the security

guard until you've asked him all your questions. When you're finished, return to the police station to hand in your evidence.

POLICE STATION

At the station, enter the elevator and proceed to level 2. Enter the Esper room and click on the right hand monitor to upload your clues to the mainframe, and to receive information from other agents on the street. With that done, click on the large monitor in the center to access the esper.

You'll notice a new image now from the crime scene, that of the Rasta replicant holding an Uzi towards the engineer. Start by selecting the head of the suspect, there he is, just right for a happy snap. Next, close in on his back pocket, and select the package he's holding in his left hand. Next, examine the dog behind him until you see the dog collar, then examine the carton of food in the crate at the lower left quarter of the screen. When all the clues have been found from that image, proceed to "the shed" (The room directly opposite).

Inside, talk to the sergeant then click on the crate on the floor. After clicking on the crate, click on the sergeant again to receive the requisition form. Exit to the hallway then click on McCoy (yourself). This is your KIA where you'll notice a ton of clues that have been downloaded from the mainframe. The one that takes our particular interest now however is the Grigorian interview B. Seems Crystal has been busy and may have uncovered some information quite pertinent to us. You can continue to go through the clues, or exit your KIA, enter the elevator and go to the lockup (Basement).

Once there, talk to Grigorian (remember to keep talking to him until he has nothing left to say) damned rep sympathiser, push him hard and extract all the information you can out of him then head back to the roof. Get in your spinner and go to animoid row.

ANIMOID ROW

At animoid row start by talking to Hassan the Snake Dealer at the far end of the scene. Continue to talk to him until there is nothing else to say, then speak to the Peruvian (Dragonfly) lady next door. Once you've completed speaking to her, exit to the left and go into Bullet Bob's.

Continue to talk to Bullet bob (You will need to click on him numerous times) and carry out the Voight Compf test on him. Damn lucky he's not a skin job. All that hardware just waiting to take us down, wouldn't stand a chance. He's clear though so once the test is completed, talk to him again to buy the high powered ammo. Exit the shop and enter Hawker's Circle.

Upon entering, the infamous Kingston Kitchen will be before you. Repeatedly talk to Mama Isabella and she will inform you on what she knows about Sadik. Walk to the left, enter China Bar and talk to the Bartender. After McCoy gets a drink from the bartender,

head right to the "Green Pawn". Izo should be standing outside (If he isn't, just exit the scene and go back in. Izo should come out.). Talk to Izo. If Izo leaves before flashing you with the camera, exit the scene and come back in. The scum will raise his camera and once you are blinded, click on the camera to pick it up with other documents. Shoot the lock on the gate and go through the trap door inside.

Once below, click on the crate of weapons to obtain a vital clue. Then continue on to the right. Click the ladder that exits to the top where Izo will be waiting with his sword drawn. Just wait and Crystal will appear to either arrest or shoot him. From here, go back underground and look around, then return to your spinner and travel to DNA Row.

DNA Row

DNA Row, sub-contractors paradise. Anyway, head left and stand outside Dermo Design. Save your game here. This is a situation where if you're not quick enough, you will end up dead. Enter into Dermo Designs where you will see Moraji in chains. Right click to draw your gun and shoot the chains off. Once he is freed, exit quickly to the left. Be careful not to click too much or you will access your kia and end up blown to bits. Once outside, double/triple click as close to the edge of the screen as possible to get far away from the blast. If you die, just reload the save game and repeat the process. After you survive the blast, talk to Moraji. Damned Replicants, because of them he'll die. Gotta take that Rastafarian down for good. Wait for the policeman to show up then talk to him. After he has nothing else to say, enter Luther/Lance's apartment which is the door left of the Dermo Design sign.

LUTHER/LANCE'S APARTMENT

Once in the apartment, click on the mannequin with the black mask to discover a clue, a Runciter's envelope, he was sure no saint. Next, click on the blue monitor just to the right to hear a saved message from "the" J.F. Sebastian. Once you've heard the message, exit the apartment and travel right (across the road) to Chew's Eye works. Once in Chew's continue to click him until you've asked him about Eisenduller, the Twins and the envelope and he has nothing else to say (a lot of clicks).

BRADBURY HOTEL

Once you're finished with Chew, exit down the alley to the left to Sebastian's abode, the Bradbury Hotel. Once inside exit through the exit at the bottom of the screen avoiding the lift to the left. Take the doorway to the right then click on the open doorway with the "up arrow" animated icon (i.e. don't select the "right animated" icon). In the bathroom, click above the ladder to climb into the rooms above. At the top you will see Sadik running down the hall. Chase him to the right into

the room with the dilapidated piece of furniture. Here, click each pane of glass until they are all broken creating a make-shift ladder. Climb to the roof where act 2 will end.

"I'm sort of an orphan." - Pris

Act 3.

CAPTURED

Tied to this chair we gotta get out of here. That heater looks like a good way to get rid of these ropes so click it (left rear corner of the room). Once untied examine the doll to the right. Start by clicking on the heel to get the Hysteria token, then the doll itself. Pick up the piece of paper to the right then exit. Under the chair is some contraband. Highly illegal cheese, be sure to pick it up too then exit to the lobby and talk to Leon. Enter the room directly behind (with the red around the door) and click on the cabinet to get Holden's badge. Exit the room, then the Hotel and click on the car and the object on the cars floorboard. Go back to your spinner and travel to Hysteria Hall.

HYSTERIA HALL

At Hysteria hall, talk to the Hot dog vendor repeatedly until he tells you all you need to know, looks like the Kingston Kitchen broad's been doing a little cheese. Hmmm. Enter the arcade and look for Lucy. (If she's not there, just exit and go back in until she is.) Talk to her until she runs away. Chase her until she escapes, then go back outside the entrance of Hysteria hall. Enter the used car lot and talk to Crazy Leggs Larry. It's time to head back to animoid row and find out just what Mama Isabella's been doing with contraband cheese.

The funny looking guy with the red jacket and bow tie, haven't we seen him around before? Sounds like Nightclub row material, but first there's a certain Peruvian lady that owes us some answers, head to the Dragonfly jewelers and ask her about the insect. Pretty lady buy 100 scorpions, there's someone to avoid. Go back to your spinner and stop back at the police station to receive some new evidence from the main frame (level 2) then head to nightclub row.

NIGHTCLUB ROW

Save your game NOW! Seems Gordo's got something to hide, like a high caliber weapon, wait for him to make his move though. Start by entering the club to the right and talking to him (in the red jacket). He'll go on stage and do a comedy routine, wait until he runs then chase him outside. Draw your gun and if he fires on you, unload it into him.

Whether he runs or you kill him, Walk to "early's bar" across the street and click on the

dancer on the stage. When Hanoi the bouncer starts coming towards you, click on the revolving booth. This next part is a little tricky, due to the dynamic nature of the game, you're hoping to find early, he's the one with the red

tails, if he's not there, you may have missed something, so reload to where you arrived at nightclub row and try again.

After you've said all that needs to be said to Early, wait for him to exit to the



left and follow him. The next room is the beginning of something noccus, a dancer, all dressed up like a dragonfly, wonder if it's a 6? Wait until she's finished her dance and exit to her dressing room left.



Talk with her, a lot, you've got a lot to say, and so does she, in fact, you're gonna have to test her, so get the Voight Compf ready. Put her through the paces and get ready for a setup. Seems she has some help, they'll come and take you away. Watch as the story unfolds and wait for Crystal to show up and save you. She's got attitude, but we'd be all fried and crispy without her.

EARLY'S BAR

Once free, walk across to the tunnel directly opposite and exit to the right. Keep going out of the subway up the stairs and meet with Crystal. Talk to her, then return to Early's bar.

Save your game and take the exit at the top center of the dance area Dektora is going to shine a projector directly into your eyes so move your aimer around and shoot when you see it go red. Follow her up the ladder to the attic. Once there, move your cursor around and fire on a point that lights up red (such as the locker). Dektora will emerge on fire, discharge your weapon into her many times until she falls from the window. Crystal will appear to congratulate you but now ain't the time for celebrating. Go back down below to discover the hard truth, someone's setting you up and now your own identity is in question. It's time to prove your innocence and extract revenge on the perps of your current situation.

Act 4.**WALKING...**

We're going to have to clear our name so start by walking left then continue across the tunnel through the hole in the wall that Crystal made when she was rescuing you. Click on the heavy metal door and enter into the green room with the intersection. Save regularly and have your weapon ready, shoot anything that attacks, cops, rats mutants or replicants, everyone is out to get you.

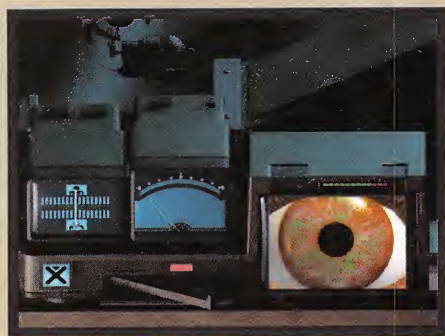
From the intersection room take the left exit, then continue left again down the catwalk. Upon entering the room with the ladder, climb the ladder and exit the manhole. Now you're outside your apartment, enter it and go in. Retrace your steps back to the intersection room.

Take the exit to the left, the round opening left of the intersection and then exit the room using the elevator. The elevator will take you down to the homeless man you saw before, talk to him and get as much info out of him as you can. The Twins replicants? Woah, a Siamese replicant error. One we're going to have to correct.

LUTHER/LANCE'S LAB

Save your game. Take the exit to the right that leads to the tunnel. Draw your weapon and click on the next exit to the right, a giant rat will appear, quickly run off the plank and

"Have you ever taken that test yourself?"
- Rachael



when the rat is at the far left hand side of the makeshift bridge, kill it. Walk across to Luther/Lance's lab. Talk to Luther and Lance, they've got a lot to say so get everything you can out of them. In particular, they won't take the Voight Compf and they admit they're replicants. The solution is sim-

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time...to die."
- Roy Batty



ple, these skin jobs have been screwing with us one too many times. Draw your weapon, aim decisively to their heads and unload until there's nothing left of them. Keep shooting until you can't shoot anymore. Anyone else wanting to conspire against Ray McCoy will get the same.

Note the 2 monitors behind the yellow enclosure. Click them, one will contain a file on Guzza, he's been setting you up all along, and shipping illicit arms to the skins. The other monitor will contain file contents, dump em to your kia. Walk up the stairs at the end of the room to Lance/Luther's apartment and click on the bank of monitors to the right. Time to play let's make a deal with Guzza. Exit back to the underground lab.

GUZZA

Lance/Luther are out of the picture, forever, the hunted has become the hunter. Exit back to the left, then click on the metal grating in the upper left of the room, it's time to dish out some more justice. Save your game. Meet with Guzza, talk to him, then, he's gonna get whacked, immediately double/triple click on the left exit.

Clovis is out to kill you so don't stop to talk. Save your game and continue to run. Out of the elevator, Clovis will grab McCoy's hand through the bars and break his fingers, Immediately, when Clovis lets go, run to the exit at the bottom of the screen. Continue left to the manhole and exit to McCoy's apartment.

Act 5.**THE GRAND FINALE!**

It's been a long week, Guzza's out of the picture and everyone's watching me. I ain't no skin job but that's something I've got to prove. Crystals calling, answer the Vid phone. Seems we've got some reps to retire, and my dog to find. Exit to the Underground and continue to the right.

From the room with the large pool, take the top exit (the open doorway at the top) Continue to

the north exit where you will encounter 2 rats. Either try and kill them immediately, or run directly to the left. Don't let them hit McCoy or you're gonna get poisoned. After exiting to the left, you'll meet up with Crystal. Follow her.

When you enter the confined room, IMMEDIATELY click on the red blinking light or Crystal's going to get blown to pieces, and you want her alive. When you point out the bomb to her, you can both avoid setting it off. Out of that room, the bastards have got Maggie, and they've tied something to her. You're going to have to click her and ...she's gonna go off. Wait for Sadik and waste that bastard. Shoot him, Shoot him again, and put a few more through him for Maggie. Spit on him and kick his worthless carcass. Walk into the moon bus where you will encounter a dying Clovis, you can listen to his pathetic ranting, or, you can just put a bullet through his head. Go for the bullet. He's dead and it's all over. You've lost more than you bargained for, but then again..... nobody lives forever.

THE END... OR IS IT?

Note, this is just one of the many possible endings to Blade Runner. It's still worth playing it through yourself in one of the other character roles. There's still an ending to be played out on a roof with a spinner and Lucy, and one where you kill Crystal and escape with the Replicants off world.

Jere Lawrenceck

WIN A 32 BIT PCI SOUND CARD!

The InnoVision Letter of the Month wins the new LEAF 32 bit/3D sound card, using the Maestro ESS Wavetable chipset. PCI 32 bit sound leaves old ISA Sound Blaster technology for dead, freeing your CPU for faster gameplay. Valued at \$199, ph InnoVision on 03 58318833 for more info, or visit www.innovision.com.au.



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Pre-Reviewing

I would just like to suggest that there should be more previews in this magazine and less reviews. All of the reviews are taking up the entire magazine so can you please lower the number of reviews or make your cool magazine twice the size.

I am starting to really get sick of companies making the same games as others for example: Quake, Doom, Wolfenstein 3D and Duke Nukem 3D. That is not the only type of game they just keep making such as Red Alert, Command and Conquer and one of my old time favourites Dune 2. I am so proud of the companies that brought out Carmageddon, Diablo and now Dungeon Keeper. These companies show that they have talent and brains. I must admit that the three games I just mentioned are my favourite because there are none such like them out yet.

Julian O'Neill

Townsville West QLD

More previews, less reviews? You got it! Being a seasonal industry, where the publishers all scramble for a Christmas release, there are fewer games for review and many more for preview at this time of year. It ebbs and flows, around June we'll see a small ton of releases, then it's back to bugger-all else except major announcements of

amazing new games which may or may not make it in time for Christmas. We'll keep you in the loop whatever's happening. We like doing previews, looking ahead at the exciting new stuff that's coming gives us a pleasurable tingle that's completely legal and doesn't require any cleaning up afterwards.

It Just Works...

I'm writing this because it's now getting quite annoying. Long ago (it seems like it) when games developers started programming a game they had whatever was around and that was it. No, they didn't have numerous different sound cards (which a lot of are incompatible with each other), 3 different graphics standards or even CD-ROM drives. Neither did they have a continuous supply of faster processors coming in. A long time ago the developers had a choice between computer A and computer A. They would write for computer A and it would run on computer A. They had to squeeze every single last bit of power out of the processor to make their game run perfectly. When computer B came out they would write a game for computer B and it would run on all computer B's. And back then nobody had really heard of compatibility problems. Today we have so many combinations of graphics cards, modems, CPUs, sound cards, CD-ROM drives etc. that things are bound to go wrong. Just say you go out to buy that new game you've been hearing so much about. You pick up the box look at the System Requirements and what da ya' know? It needs a P200 with 32Mb 6 Speed CD-ROM drive... So what are you supposed to do? Go and spend \$1000 to beef up your system so that it'll be obsolete in a weeks time? I guess the point I'm trying to make here is that hardware vendors keep releasing newer and faster peripherals when maybe we don't really need them? Then I'd also blame the software companies for taking advantage of this new hardware when maybe we don't need it. It all comes down the money though. We are being sucked in as the software and hardware companies spin around in a loop feeding off of each other.

INNOVISION LETTER OF THE MONTH

Death of a Single Player

It was heartening to read the editorial in your March issue supporting the idea of the single-player scenarios in today's games. I have watched with ever-increasing dread the trend of shifting emphasis away from single-player and towards multi-player - so much so that a truly great game can lose considerable kudos if it makes the fatal flaw of not having multi-player support. Well, I'm all for multi-player gaming, and sometimes I'm lucky enough to enjoy it myself, but let's not forget the single-player element! Multi-player games either require you to have a phenomenally good connection to the internet (which I do not), or have lots of friends. I have plenty of friends, thank you, but none of them are interested in computer games! Your articles on Ultima Online and the tank game Tanarus also illustrate nicely what you call the "wanker syndrome" - that is, for every good game you'll experience over the 'net, you'll have to put up with several which are ruined by total imbeciles. As I'm paying good money for the privilege of playing over the net, I don't appreciate morons ruining my games.

The art of the single-player game is in serious danger, but it's not something we should lose. It's very easy for games programmers to gloss over the single-player element because 1. It's trendy to be multi and 2. It's hard to pull the single-player game off well. I rejoiced considerably at the release of I-War - no multi-player element to futz the gameplay (e.g. "Oh, we had to miss out xxx because it unbalanced the multi-player part"), and a game where it's very obvious that a huge amount of effort and care has gone into making it a memorable experience for the single player.

Thank you Particle Systems. Let us play with each other to our heart's content, but let's not forget how much fun it is to play with ourselves!

**Adam Britton
Darwin**

Totally, Adam. There's nothing I can add to this - you've nailed it. This is the biggest problem facing gamers today, as far as I'm concerned. Truly original, well designed, and satisfying games for the single player (most of us) are becoming disturbingly rare. It is a cause we will be supporting with all our hate and anger. As with at least a couple of other letters in this issue, the blame rests squarely with the influence marketing has over design.

Matthew Lehmann

P.S. It seems the consoles are like the computers in the past (no upgrades).

One could argue that it's actually the complete opposite situation at the moment. So we will. In the old days video cards were much the same, performance-wise, and there were certainly no proprietary hassles either, but each and every year (or more often) gamers would have to upgrade to the fastest new Intel CPU. This usually meant a motherboard upgrade too, as, unlike now, older boards generally couldn't handle faster CPUs simply being plonked in. Now we have Win 95 and DirectX standardising everything. All new hardware and

software must comply. Put a 3Dfx card in a Pentium 166 and you've got a games machine that'll give you good, playable frame rates plus amazing graphics for years to come. Only hard core users need to look at going to the Voodoo 2 or Pentium 2 at this point. It's the golden age, really it is!

"Forget it mate, Quake 2 will never run on your 233"

I have just purchased a copy of your magazine, and I must say it was very interesting. I am 50 years of age and still like to play the odd game or two. Lately, I have noticed the big acclaim for Quake II in Oz computer magazines. Well this is where the I

now draw the line. I purchased Quake II just before Christmas for my two teenage daughters who loved as I, the original Quake, and I was not amused. I have a Pentium 233 MMX with 32M of RAM and a 24 speed CD with 32 bit Soundblaster. The game ran in slow motion and the sound was broken and distorted. I went back to the large chain superstore where I purchased the game and was told by the computer experts there, that the Direct X was the problem. They told me to forget it, that they had had the same problem on their machines in the store and that I should swap the game for something else! Well, what can I say? I read all the glowing reports from your Jere Lawrence and others, and I ask myself what the hell is going on? Your magazine and others like it must realize not everyone has a top machine with a 3D card like the ones mentioned by Jere, or that they have the know-how to get around conflicts on the different machine setups, out in the big real world. What needs to happen here is a full test on different machine setups before you race off at the mouth about these products. At \$89, most people cannot afford the mistake of buying a game, only to be told when returning it that there is no refund or exchange. I was lucky that I could get an exchange, but that is not always the case. I realize that you owe some form of loyalty to the producers of these games, otherwise you loose sponsorship. But many times a lot of the software boosted up by magazines, is not always as good as what it is made out to be. By all means check out the games, but do it with an open mind to the simple people out in the world with ordinary machines or knowledge, and you will get a lot more praise from them than the game producers, and isn't that what you are there for in the first place?

Let me just say this in closing, I have worked around computers both network and PC for the last 25 years. I think I know what I am talking about with regards to the above comments. I will still

buy your magazine, because of it's top quality. You have not lost me yet! Just please, resolve the problem with commenting on games that are supposed to be great and think of the ordinary person on the street and give him a break be honest in your appraisal.

Terry Slattery

Oh dear... With all due respect to the mostly-knowledgeable staff at these shops, it sounds like the "Computer Expert" you got usually works in the Manchester dept. And was filling in for someone sick that day. Your PC is an excellent Quake 2 platform. If indeed DirectX was the problem, it would have taken about 20 seconds to install, it comes with every new game CD - including Quake 2. Even in low-res, software only mode, Quake 2 should look great and fly on your machine. Put in a 3Dfx or Riva video card and you'll be crying tears of joy. I really hate seeing someone duded out of a great game experience because the shop assistant was too lazy or ill-informed to fix a very simple problem. Please, go get Quake 2 again and email us if you have any problems.

It Doesn't Look as Good on My PC!

An electronic pen pal, or whatever the current term for that is, and I had been discussing that in the days when Amiga's were games machines to be reckoned with that we saw many games boxes that showed screenshots with comments "PC screen shots". He discussed a particular game he'd just bought with high expectations, and whilst the gameplay satisfied him he felt that the graphics were severely lacking. Of course I can't name the game but I can say that it showed no actual game play screen shots, just high res cut

images. Now we all know that if we read your magazine that we'll see screen

shots of actual game play but that doesn't help those either not lucky enough to read your magazine or the buyer who finds a game that sounds interesting but it hasn't been reviewed.

We came up with a standard that we feel would be good to be adopted by the gaming industry. Currently displayed on the box is the minimum specs to play it and the recommended specs. We feel that two additional things should be included with every box: Actual in game screen shots with captions that say what resolution is used and what 3D card if any was used; and a label somewhere indicating a rough performance of what resolutions you should expect from the rated minimum spec computer and the suggested computer.

Now before you jump up and down over the last comment I am not an idiot and I am well aware that no two machines of a certain processor perform the same. This is purely meant to be a guide so that if it says 25fps at 640x480 and 15fps at 800x600 on a Proo that people can make a choice about whether they are happy playing the game at a lower resolution.

I know that there are also a great deal many other things that could be included on the box such as: multiplayer capability;

Hey, we know graphics don't maketh the game, and you shouldn't count your game hours before you get the final box, but we can't help getting excited about Tiberian Sun, especially when they give us rendered art of this calibre...



what type

of networking is supported; how much memory is needed in multiplayer; how much memory is needed with large maps (and in networked with large maps); types of 3D card support; what super machines was it developed on; and many more. However I have limited it to those above with respect to the games developers who might never get the game to the shelf otherwise.

I know that if it weren't for the demo's on your cover disks that I may have bought a few of the games I liked the look of only to find myself back at the shop trying to convince them to allow me to return the game. I have had to do so once and it is like the Grand Inquisitor is making an example of you. It's very hard to explain why a game doesn't meet your satisfaction when you explain you bought it specifically for multiplayer and it only has Internet support, not local IPX.

Rex Retallick

Thanks Rex for raising an excellent point. Only occasionally does a game box show and label clearly the different modes a game can be played in. The advent of 3D accelerators is helping this along to some extent, as the publishers now have a far more compelling reason to show the game running in the two vastly different modes (software and hardware). There won't ever be a requirement for publishers to do this, but remember the ones who do as being honourable and honest.

Bathurst 1000 Sim

I've been playing TOCA Tourers and have found it to be the best racing sim ever! The game code written gives the game a realistic driving model, and the graphics are stunning, non 3Dfx.

I was wondering if PCPP could start a petition to be sent to Codemasters asking them to buy the rights to our Aussie tourers and making the definitive Oz tourer. The game Bathurst 1000 is pathetic and a waste of \$40.

Steven Macerak, JNR
Brooklyn VIC

More than anything else in the world, we need a Bathurst 1000 sim. We get letters every month lamenting the lack of such a sim. Hey! Developers! Please! Every gamer in Australia would buy a copy and when the international market sees just how much fun it would be (IF done properly) then it'd be a hit and you'd make TONS of cash! Good eh! Well?

Online Gaming 1

I would like to thank you for printing the article about Single player vs. Multiplayer gaming (issue 21). I, like David Wildgoose, prefer the single player games and it's so refreshing to hear from those at the forefront of the gaming industry (let's face it, the people who make games need gaming magazines such as yourself, and thus I would consider you the forefront) that the single player game is not dead yet. Let's just hope someone from the big gaming companies picks up issue 21 and has a read.

Also I'd like to ask if it wasn't for the mods and bots and TC's for Quake would it still be sitting on your HDD Gareth? It seems to me that those user created add-ons have not improved on a great game but improved on a mediocre game that would have come and gone as quick as Sega's 32X. I think a truly great multiplayer game shouldn't have to be added to (at least not to such a degree as Quake has) as a single player with great AI or a great story line and plot doesn't need to be.

Tony Elliott

Online Gaming 2

Ultima Online. The first MEGApayer game. People say it's fantastic, some say it would

be better without the Player Killers. I say it's good to have them. Now before everyone starts yelling foul murder and calling me a PK, let me just continue my point. Anyone who has played UO will have fought dragons, demons, trolls, etc, etc, but they posed no real threat, especially for the seasoned player. PK's are a real threat, they are more evil then Mondain as they kill their own. Let me ask you this; does killing a PK give you a sense of achievement? It should. You have helped clear Britannia of yet another threat. As yet there is no set story line for UO, but I believe there already is. The cyber citizens of UO are fighting the biggest threat to Britannia ever! You can kill as many demons and trolls you like, but that doesn't mean anything. Kill a PK and you have rid the fantasy land of one more sick, twisted basted. I hope you publish my letter as it may help convince people that they are fighting for the greater good!

Chris McCarthy

Online Gaming 3

I read your excellent review about Ultima Online and thought it to be detailed and precise. Ok, enough grovelling! I am an Ultima Online player and as it was pointed out we can only play on the West Coast of America.

Now I am writing to request a favour on behalf of the people who are Australian UO players and the people of the Australian UOChamber. This is the official Australian UO page and it has great information about the game. It has set up a UO petition to try and get Australia a UO server of its own. Could you please help this petition going by printing this letter or by doing a similar article about this topic? The UOChamber is located at <http://uoc.newsnninja.com/>.

Adam Henry

Alright! Along with 3D acceleration, Online Gaming is truly (in our opinion) the greatest thing to ever happen to gaming. We've been evangelising it all along, and are thrilled to see it finally kicking in. There's room in this world for excellent online as well as single player games, although we're starting to be a bit bothered by new games which seem to have compro-

mised good single player gameplay in the interests of multiplayer support. Case in point is Star Wars: Rebellion. A generally fine game, but would have been a lot better (again, in our opinion) if it were turn based instead of the multiplayer-preferred real-time...

The Sequel Dilemma

I feel sorry for game developers. Take Tomb Raider as a prime example. Everybody (almost), raved about the amazing graphics, the incredible game play and the way that the puzzles were just right. The developers then made Tomb Raider 2. Essentially it is very similar to Tomb Raider 1. I guess they figured that people bought TR1 because they liked its features. To not put those same features in TR2 would be cheating an adoring public. I mean, how would you feel if you had read all of Stephen King's novels because you love the way he writes about horror, and you went and bought his latest offering, (which just cost you around \$35.00 for the hardcover edition), only to find it was a historical fiction set in the American Civil War?

And yet, many people are disappointed when they buy a sequel to a game and find that it is similar to the first, even when some of its less redeeming features have been improved. Maybe some of us don't understand what a sequel is.

What are these poor developers supposed to do, make their next production similar to, or completely different from the previous game?

Just by the by, I'm glad Lara got a reduction second time around. Putting some of us gals to shame, she was.

Kerry Watson
Grafton NSW

By The Riven of Babble On

The world of gaming today is fiercely dominated by death, blood and other violence related insanities. I have no problems with these issues, in fact I rather enjoy the odd game of Quake or something similar. These sorts of games give you a strange yet fantastic sense of power enabling you to roam around and kill whatever YOU want to kill! This

sort of thing can only be matched by something of exceptional quality, enthralling gameplay and fascinating addictiveness. Riven is all of this and more.

Now, as soon as I unwrapped Riven this Christmas, I genuinely stated "Gee, this looks interesting, it might be good to have a different sort of game to play!" How right I was. As soon as I installed Riven onto my PC, I was eager to see the graphics of it which had been shown in certain previews etc.

After I had explored the islands of Riven for about 2 and a half hours (seemed like 20 minutes!), I realized how this game could be so popular among the ever-increasingly demanding gaming population. It is an interesting yet very exciting innovation to the gaming industry in contrast to the growing number of violence related computer games being released onto the shelves each week!

Riven, in my opinion is a fantastic experience which allows players to marvel at its beauty whilst drawing them in with its addictive gameplay.

Damian

The freedom to make choices based on personal taste, without fear of recrimination from your peers is the foundation stone of modern society. Or something.

More Than Just a Game

I am just sending this to say that I totally agree with the sentiments put forward by both your Editor and Andrew Breese. I am referring of course, to the matter of game manuals, and the letter in PCPP #22.

Not only has the size and quality of most game manuals decreased in recent time (there are a few exceptions, but these are mostly sims, that would be impossible to play without lots of help), but there are a lot less "nice things to get for free" as well.

Two of my favourite games of all time, Tie Fighter and Death Gate, came with mini novels in the box. Admittedly this was removed from the CD version of Tie Fighter, but I read the Marek Steele Chronicles before I even thought about playing the game. Ultima always has those rather nifty cloth maps with them, and while I never actually used them, I still thought it was nice to get something, for support-

ing the game and the publisher, and not pirating the game, as is so easy to do.

Another practice that really annoys me (and I daresay most other people) is when a game company releases the game, then later releases it with a new cool thing on it. There are two examples of this where I have been caught out. Firstly, Daggerfall came out about 6 months after first release with a cool pewter figure inside the box, and just after Xmas I saw a store selling Outlaws, with a free soundtrack CD with it. I know you can listen to the soundtrack off the game CD, but if you are like me and your PC is not in the same room as your stereo, it becomes a trial traversing the cold dark pathways of my house, just to hear some funky tunes. I didn't rant and rave when I found these little gifts, but it did make me stop and think that maybe next time I would hold off on my purchase until I was sure there was not going to be a freebie.

If it wasn't for the people who buy the games when they come out, there would be no money for upgrades, patch fixes (something Bethesda Softworks knows all about) and not as much word of mouth advertising. It doesn't make much sense to me.

Daniel Simington

Note to Publishers: On behalf of everybody we'd like to say that we'd like more cool, free, extra stuff in game boxes. Thanks!

Review Policy

Hi I am from NZ, I have been buying your magazine since July last years here are some things I wanted to say.

1. I find you review games are very fair, not like some American magazines. Eg You gave Total Annihilation a great rating which I agree with, you looked at the positive things the most, unlike the other magazines, I quote "I would've given it 90%, but its manual was not good enough so it finished with a 81% rating."

2. Your magazine reaches here in NZ very quickly and I have been one of your previous game winners. It was Dark Reign, I entered it because of your great review you gave it and I loved it.

3. People who write you letters

are positive and talk about interesting things. Unlike the UK ones they complain about everything.

4. I just wanted to add a few points to the letter about cheats from David Adams. I was playing Screamer 2 for yonks but could not get anywhere in the championships. So I used a cheat to get all the tracks this gave me the urge to play it more and more. I also agree that if you cheat you can make the game boring, like in Quake 2 I cheated in it and I found the game just got boring since it was all too easy.

5. In your December issue I liked your Total Annihilation guide and it was very helpful and now I can start beating some people on the internet again.

6. There was only one question I wanted to ask, how long does it take you to review one game in the magazine eg. days, hours, weeks?

Nicholas Davidson

New Zealand

The general answer to your question is; as long as possible. We usually get a series of progressively improving beta versions throughout a game's development, and these are played hard by the reviewer designated to the game (each reviewer is a specialist in specific game genres, and from the moment the first beta of a game arrives all new info and versions are passed to only that reviewer). This lets them familiarise themselves with the game, as well as gaining an appreciation of the evolution of it and the care that's gone into it. Then, when we get the final version the reviewer gets up to 4 weeks to complete the review. When a particularly deep and complex game needs reviewing, we try not to give that reviewer too much extra to do that month so they can get right into it. If a game arrives close to deadline, we won't do a rush job, but simply hold the review off until the following issue to give the reviewer more time and the game a fair go.

For the record, we never review incomplete beta versions. 90% of the time it's the shrink-wrapped box that gets the once over, with the remainder being gold discs that are sent to us as soon as the game has "gone code" - meaning they are identical to the box-version. The publishers send us these to give us an extra 2 weeks or so lead time before the box hits the shelf. In short, we only review the exact same product you buy.

FREAK of the month

Freak File: Paul & Lorna

Name	Paul	Lorna
Type of computer	Pentium 166 MMX	Pentium 100
Profession	Postie	Administration
Likes	Sci fi/fantasy stuff BB sing	Unicorns, multi user games, being a mum
Dislikes	Starting work at 6am	Paul touching my Computer
Favourite Sport	10 Pin bowling	Baseball
Favourite Food	Choccy	Takeaway- anything I don't have to cook!
Favourite Drink	Kahlua and milk	Mineral water (true!) and Kahlua and milk
Favourite TV	Simpsons	Friends, Oprah, Cartoons
Favourite Music	Anything but Country and Western	Black Sorrows, Bull Sisters, Soundtracks
Top 3 Game	Quake, Dungeon Master Red Alert	War Craft 2, Red Alert, Sim City 2000
Fav Multi Player Game	Quake	Red Alert
Online Nickname	Pugman	Melody
Previous PC's and consoles	Hanimex Pong, Atari 2600, Intelelevision, Calico Vision, Atari 400, Atari ST, Megadrive, IBM PC, Playstation, 2nd IBM PC.	

Our Story.....

To think it all began with an Atari ST... Ahh.. The good old days. We would fight over what games we would play, who would go first and who got to use the "good" joystick. Not much changed when we upgraded to a PC. So to save our marriage we went and bought a second computer. This computer was to be "my" computer. It was to have the stuff I wanted on it and was not to be touched by Paul. How long do you think this lasted? Not very long at all. He is always upgrading it (yes, I know I shouldn't complain about that), adding games, taking away games and I will never forget the day he took away my much loved Windows 3.1 and replaced it with windows 95. (Yes, I realize it's much better, but at the time I was not happy!). This still wasn't enough for him. We now have our computers networked so he can use the printer from his computer (it's attached to mine for my word processing) and of course, more importantly, he can put games on mine when he has no room left! I must admit I have learned to appreciate the networking as well, because I can take out my frustration on him and try and smash him to bits in Quake or C&C.

Oh, Did I mention that we have a 4 month old daughter? I don't get to use the computer as often these days. Every so often I carry Alyssa into the computer room so she won't forget who her daddy is. The scary thing is Paul already has a keyboard for her to play with so she won't touch his beloved PC!



There's an old saying: "A family that plays plays Red Alert online together, stays together", and thanks to Paul & Lorna, our faith in the future of family values and humankind has been profoundly re-affirmed...

GHOSTS & GOBLINS

Commodore 64 Developer: Elite

Ah the sweet, sweet Commodore 64. No one who owned one of these pieces of 8-bit brilliance will ever forget the classic games and indeed game genres that were born on this platform. You can't help but be cynical and think of how many games are derivatives of concepts spawned from this machine and how so many gamers don't realise it. It's like watching Baz Luhrman's *Romeo and Juliet* without realising that Bad Billy Shakespeare wrote the original hundreds of years ago. But I digress. I'm here to tell you about an arcade classic called *Ghosts 'n Goblins* and try to explain exactly why I



liked it so much.

The plot (nothing mind-blowing) is that you are a knight who had to rescue a fair maiden from the clutches of an evil dragon. You fought through different levels with different monsters and fought bosses at the end of each level, until you reached the ultimate bad guy, then you kill him and get the girl. It was a relatively simple concept, but *Ghosts 'n Goblins* was the forerunner of a lot of ideas that carried through to the most popular platform games on the PC. True, platformers have all but died out in the 3D obsessed 90's (Agent Armstrong did try to bring the genre back to the PC introducing 3D support, but somehow I think the gaming public has moved on to bigger and better things). But platformers are still around in the consoles and still appeal to heaps of people due to their 'ease of use'.

This game didn't have depth. It didn't have complex moves, a huge inventory of items or heaps of weapons to choose from. It was simple, fun and didn't have much competition.

But it could also be challenging and frustrating in the same way so many games were back then. You only had four men. You could only get hit twice (one hit takes your armour off and one more turned you into a pile of bones), you only had 3 minutes to finish each level and you couldn't save - talk about harsh! You could also use five different weapons, but only one at a time and had to wait for an

enemy to drop it after you killed him.

Both the arcade version and the C64 port also picked up on an aspect often overlooked in PC games - the

One of the progenitors of many modern day platformers, G&G was both an infuriatingly exacting challenge, and just plain good fun at the same time.



music. Quite simply, it fit the mood of the game perfectly. The *Ghosts 'n Goblins* theme ranks right up there with the *Galaga* theme (which was not written for the game anyway, it's a classical piece) and *Commando*, another C64 title.

The C64 version had less levels than the arcade version, but was still hard to finish (even with the crack that gave you unlimited men). It also featured multiplayer mode where you and a mate could take turns on the same machine - a slightly different approach to

today's concept of "multiplayer". It all doesn't sound like much, but this game was the forerunner of the classic platform shooters that came after it on the PC from Apogee like *Commander Keen* and good ole Duke Nukem.

I still wonder where old arcade games go when they are no longer popular. Surely they must exist somewhere. I once found an old *Midnight Resistance* in a dingy pool hall somewhere out the back of Rooty Hill and was the source of much amusement for the locals as I started frothing at the mouth - "20c for 2 credits, am I in heaven?!" Sometimes you gotta go back to your roots.

George Argy



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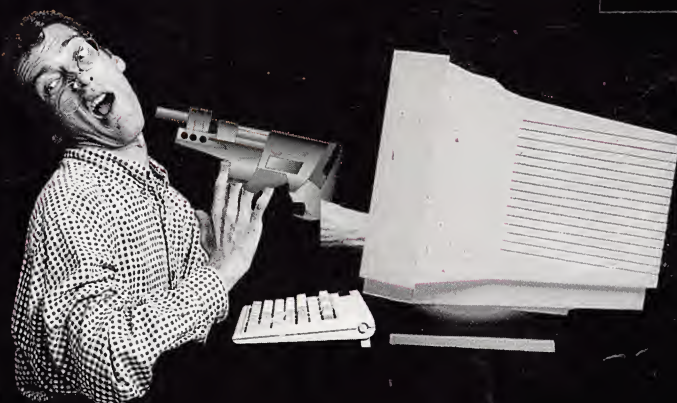
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